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THE WORKS

OF

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

PROSE AND VERSE,

VIZ:

OUR VILLAGE,	FOSCARI,
BELFORD REGIS,	JULIAN,
COUNTRY STORIES,	RIENZI,
FINDEN'S TABLEAUX.	CHARLES THE FIRST.

PHILADELPHIA:
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

THERE are few names which fall with a pleasanter sound upon the ears of those who adopt authors as friends, in recognition of the moral purity and geniality of feeling as much as of the original talent displayed in their works, than the name of MARY RUSSELL MITFORD. Happy thoughts and fresh images rise up when it is spoken; and yet we are a trifle too apt to think of it only as connected with all that is lovely in the rural scenery, and characteristic in the rural society of Southern England, and to forget that it also appertains to a dramatist of no common power, who has wrought in a period, when—if the theatres be deserted, and the popular acted drama have degenerated into melo-drama, burletta, and farce—the plays published exhibit far more signs of strength and promise, than were shown by those produced in the palmy days of Garrick, or the yet more glorious after-summer of the Kembles.

It was at Christmas time, in the year 1789, that Miss Mitford was born, her birth-place being the little town of Alresford, Hampshire. She is descended on the father's side, from an ancient family in Northumberland, not remotely connected with nobility; and there is a quaint rhyme current in the north country, which promises the name a long duration:

> "Midford was Midford when Morpeth was nane,
> Midford shall be Midford when Morpeth is gane;
> So long as the sun sets or the moon runs her round,
> A Midford in Midford shall always be found."

Her mother was the only daughter of Dr. Russell, of Ashe, in Hampshire; this lady was a singularly good classical scholar, and it would have been strange if under such auspices, the education of her daughter had not been liberally planned and carefully completed. How delightfully Miss Mitford has chronicled her school pleasures and school feelings, during the years between the ages of ten and fifteen, passed by her at a London boarding-school of high repute, no one who has read "Our Village" can have forgotten. By her own showing she was as shy as she was clever, after a somewhat original fashion—a keen lover of poetry and plays. And shortly after she left school, she showed the next evidence of talent, the possession of a creative as well as appreciative power, by publishing a volume of miscellaneous poems, which were favourably received; for in those days poetry was read. These, and other juvenile effusions, now all but forgotten, were, at the time of their appearing, successful; but their young writer was herself dissatisfied with them; conscious, perhaps, that they were little more than imitations, and forgetting that it was by imitation that genius has almost always in the first instance manifested itself. She withdrew herself from composition — read much, though without any decided aim or object, and would never (she thinks) have attempted authorship again, had not those vicissitudes of fortune, which try the metal of the sufferer no less searchingly than the sincerity of his friends, compelled her to come forth from her retreat, and honourably to exercise the talents with which she had been so largely gifted. It would be raising the veil too high to dwell upon the sequel; upon the rich reward of love, and respect, and consideration, which have repaid so zealous and unselfish a devotion of time and talent as Miss Mitford's life has shown. We have but to speak of the good which has come out of evil, in the shape of her writings; and we do this briefly and rapidly, because of the limited space within which we are restricted.

Miss Mitford's principal efforts have been a series of tragedies. "The Two Foscari,"—"Julian,"—"Rienzi," —"Charles the First,"—have been all represented, and all well received — the third with signal success. Besides these may be mentioned two other tragedies, still in manuscript, "Inez de Castro" and "Otto of Wittelsbach," Miss Mitford's last, finest work. In all these plays there is strong vigorous writing, — masculine in the free unshackled use of language, but wholly womanly in its purity from coarseness or license, and in the intermixture of those incidental touches of softest feeling and finest observation, which are peculiar to the gentler sex. A rich air of the south breathes over "Rienzi;" and in the "Charles," though the character of Cromwell will be felt to vibrate, it is, on the whole, conceived with a just and acute discernment of its real and false greatness—of the thousand contradictions which, in reality, make the son of the Huntingdon brewer a character too difficult, and mighty, for any one beneath a Shakspeare to exhibit. As also in Joanna Baillie's fine tragedies, the poetry of these plays is singularly fresh and unconventional; equally clear of Elizabethan quaintness and of modern Della-cruscanism, which, as some hold, indicate an exhausted and artificial state of society, in which the drama— the hearty, bold, natural drama — has no existence. At all events, it is now too much the fashion that every thing which is written for the stage shall be forgotten so soon as the actors employed in it have "fretted their hour." Were it otherwise, we should not have need to dwell, even thus briefly, upon the distinctive merits of Miss Mitford's tragedies.

In leaving them, however, we cannot but point attention to the happy choice of their subjects, and in doing this, may venture a remark or two which will lead us on to the works by which Miss Mitford is most widely known—her sketches of country life and scenery. Among the characteristics which eminently distinguish female authorship, it has often struck us, that there is none more certain and striking than an instinctive quickness of discovery and happiness in working out available subjects and fresh veins of fancy. At least, if we travel through the domains of lighter literature during the last fifty years, we shall find enough to prove our assertion. We shall find the supernatural romance growing into eminence under the hands of Anna Radcliffe—the national tale introduced to the public by Miss Edgeworth and Lady Morgan—the historical novel by Miss Lee and the Miss Porters—the story of domestic life, with commonplace persons for its actors, brought to its last perfection by Miss Austen. We shall find "Kenilworth" anticipated by the "Recess" (a tale strangely forgotten,) and "Werner," owing not only its origin, but its very dialogue to "Kruitzner"—and the stories of "Foscari" and "Rienzi," ere they fell into the hands of Byron and Bulwer, fixed upon with a happy boldness by the authoress under notice. But the claims of Miss Mitford to swell the list of *inventors*, rest upon yet firmer grounds; they rest upon those exquisite sketches by which—their scenery all, and their characters half real—she has created a school of writing, homely but not vulgar, familiar but not breeding contempt, (in this point alone not resembling the highly finished pictures of the Dutch school,) wherein the small events and the simple characters of rural life, are made interesting by the truth and sprightliness with which they are represented.

Every one now knows "Our Village," and every one knows that the nooks and corners, the haunts and copses so delightfully described in its pages, will be found in the immediate neighbourhood of Reading, and more especially around "Three Mile Cross," a cluster of cottages on the Basingstoke road, in one of which our authoress has now resided for many years. But so little was the peculiar and original excellence of her descriptions understood, in the first instance, that, after having gone the round of rejection through the more important periodicals, they at last saw the light in no worthier publication than the *Lady's Magazine*. But the series of rural pictures grew, and the venture of collecting them into a separate volume was tried. The public began to relish the style so fresh yet so finished, to enjoy the delicate humour and the simple pathos of the tales; and the end was, that the popularity of these sketches somewhat outgrew that of the works of loftier order, proceeding from the same pen—that young writers, English and American, began to imitate so artless and charming a manner of narration; and that an obscure Berkshire hamlet, by the magic of talent and kindly feeling, was converted into a place of resort and interest for not a few of the finest spirits of the age.

It should, perhaps, be owned in speaking of these village sketches, that their writer *enamels* too brightly—not the hedge-rows and the meadow-streams, the orchards and the cottage gardens, for who could exceed nature?—but the figures which people the scene; that her country boys and village girls are too refined, too constantly turned "to favour and to prettiness." But this flattery only shows to us the health and benevolence of mind belonging to the writer; nor would it be just to count it as a fault, unless we also were to denounce Crabbe as an unfaithful painter of English life and scenery, because, with a tendency diametrically opposite, he lingers like a lover in the workhouse and the hovel, and dwells rather upon decay, and meanness, and misery, than the prosperity and charity and comfort with which their gloom is so largely chequered. He may be called the Caravaggio, Miss Mitford the Claude, of village life in England; and the truth lies between them. Both, however, are remarkable for the purity and selectness of their language; both paint with words, in a manner as faithful as it is significant. Crabbe should be reserved for those bright moments when the too buoyant spirits require a chastener, a memento of the "days of darkness;" Miss Mitford resorted to in hours of depression and misgiving, when any book bearing an olive-branch to tell us that there is fair weather abroad, is a blessed visitant.

After publishing five volumes of these charming sketches, a wider field for the same descriptive powers was found in a small market-town, its peculiarities and its inhabitants,—and "Belford Regis" was written. But the family likeness between this work and "Our Village" is so strong as to spare us the necessity of dwelling upon its features. And now our record may be closed, as it is not permitted to us to dwell upon the private pleasures and cares of an uneventful life, spent for the most part in a "labourer's cottage, with a duchess's flower-garden." We should mention, however, the recent addition of Miss Mitford's name to the pension-list, as one among many gratifying proofs, that literature is increasingly becoming an object of care and protection to statesmen, and that in this much-stigmatized world, talent and self-sacrifice do not always pass on their way unsympathized with or unrecognized.

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OUR VILLAGE:

SKETCHES OF RURAL CHARACTER AND SCENERY.

PREFACE.*

The following pages contain an attempt to delineate country scenery and country manners, as they exist in a small village in the south of England. The writer may at least claim the merit of a hearty love of her subject, and of that local and personal familiarity, which only a long residence in one neighbourhood could have enabled her to attain. Her descriptions have always been written on the spot, and at the moment, and in nearly every instance with the closest and most resolute fidelity to the place and the people. If she be accused of having given a brighter aspect to her villagers than is usually met with in books, she cannot help it, and would not if she could. She has painted, as they appeared to her, their little frailties and their many virtues, under an intense and thankful conviction, that in every condition of life, goodness and happiness may be found by those who seek them, and never more surely than in the fresh air, the shade, and the sunshine of nature.

OUR VILLAGE.

Of all situations for a constant residence, that which appears to me most delightful is a little village far in the country; a small neighbourhood, not of fine mansions finely peopled, but of cottages and cottage-like houses, "messuages or tenements," as a friend of mine calls such ignoble and nondescript dwellings, with inhabitants whose faces are as familiar to us as the flowers in our garden; a little world of our own, close-packed and insulated like ants in an ant-hill, or bees in a hive, or sheep in a fold, or nuns in a convent, or sailors in a ship; where we know every one, are known to every one, interested in every one, and authorised to hope that every one feels an interest in us. How pleasant it is to slide into these true-hearted feelings from the kindly and unconscious influence of habit, and to learn to know and to love the people about us, with all their peculiarities, just as we learn to know and to love the nooks and turns of the shady lanes and sunny commons that we pass every day. Even in books I like a confined locality, and so do the critics when they talk of the unities. Nothing is so tiresome as to be whirled half over Europe at the chariot wheels of a hero, to go to sleep at Vienna, and awaken at Madrid; it produces a real fatigue, a weariness of spirit. On the other hand, nothing is so delightful as to sit down in a country village in one of Miss Austen's delicious novels, quite sure before we leave it to become intimate with every spot and every person it contains; or to ramble with Mr. White† over his own parish of Selborne, and form a friendship with the fields and coppices, as well as with the birds, mice, and squirrels, who inhabit them; or to sail with Robinson Crusoe to his island, and live there with him and his goats and his man Friday;—how much we dread any new comers, any fresh importation of savage or sailor! we never sympathise for a moment in our hero's want of company, and are quite grieved when he gets away;—or to be shipwrecked with Ferdinand on that other lovelier island—the island of Prospero, and Miranda, and Caliban, and Ariel, and nobody else, none of Dryden's exotic inventions;—that is best of all. And a small neighbourhood is as good in sober waking reality as in poetry or prose; a village neighbourhood, such as this Berkshire Hamlet in which I write, a long, straggling winding street at the bottom of a fine eminence, with a road through it, always abounding in carts, horsemen, and carriages, and lately enlivened by a stage-coach from B——— to S———, which passed through about ten days ago, and will I suppose return some time or other. There are coaches of all varieties now-a-days; perhaps this may be intended for a monthly diligence, or a fortnight

*To the first volume, as originally published.

†White's Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne; one of the most fascinating books ever written. I wonder that no naturalist has adopted the same plan.

fly. Will you walk with me through our village, courteous reader? The journey is not long. We will begin at the lower end, and proceed up the hill.

The tidy, square, red cottage on the right hand, with the long well-stocked garden by the side of the road, belongs to a retired publican from a neighbouring town; a substantial person with a comely wife; one who piques himself on independence and idleness, talks politics, reads newspapers, hates the minister, and cries out for reform. He introduced into our peaceable vicinage the rebellious innovation of an illumination on the queen's acquittal. Remonstrance and persuasion were in vain; he talked of liberty and broken windows—so we all lighted up. Oh! how he shone that night with candles and laurel, and white bows, and gold paper, and a transparency (originally designed for a pocket handkerchief) with a flaming portrait of her Majesty, hatted and feathered, in red ochre. He had no rival in the village, that we all acknowledged; the very bonfire was less splendid; the little boys reserved their best crackers to be expended in his honour, and he gave them full sixpence more than any one else. He would like an illumination once a month; for it must not be concealed that, in spite of gardening, of newspaper reading, of jaunting about in his little cart, and frequenting both church and meeting, our worthy neighbour begins to feel the weariness of idleness. He hangs over his gate, and tries to entice passengers to stop and chat; he volunteers little jobs all round, smokes cherry-trees to cure the blight, and traces and blows up all the wasp-nests in the parish. I have seen a great many wasps in our garden to-day, and shall enchant him with the intelligence. He even assists his wife in her sweepings and dustings. Poor man! he is a very respectable person, and would be a very happy one, if he would add a little employment to his dignity. It would be the salt of life to him.

Next to his house, though parted from it by another long garden with a yew arbour at the end, is the pretty dwelling of the shoemaker, a pale, sickly-looking, black-haired man, the very model of sober industry. There he sits in his little shop from early morning till late at night. An earthquake would hardly stir him: the illumination did not. He stuck immoveably to his last, from the first lighting up, through the long blaze and the slow decay, till his large solitary candle was the only light in the place. One cannot conceive any thing more perfect than the contempt which the man of transparencies and the man of shoes must have felt for each other on that evening. There was at least as much vanity in the sturdy industry as in the strenuous idleness, for our shoemaker is a man of substance; he employs three journeymen, two lame, and one a dwarf, so that his shop looks like an hospital; he has purchased the lease of his commodious dwelling, some even say that he has bought it out and out; and he has only one pretty daughter, a light, delicate, fair-haired girl of fourteen, the champion, protectress, and playfellow of every brat under three years old, whom she jumps, dances, dandles, and feeds all day long. A very attractive person is that child-loving girl. I have never seen any one in her station who possessed so thoroughly that undefinable charm, the lady-look. See her on a Sunday in her simplicity and her white frock, and she might pass for an earl's daughter. She likes flowers too, and has a profusion of white stocks under her window, as pure and delicate as herself.

The first house on the opposite side of the way is the blacksmith's; a gloomy dwelling, where the sun never seems to shine; dark and smoky within and without, like a forge. The blacksmith is a high officer in our little state, nothing less than a constable: but, alas! alas! when tumults arise, and the constable is called for, he will commonly be found in the thickest of the fray. Lucky would it be for his wife and her eight children if there were no public-house in the land: an inveterate inclination to enter those bewitching doors is Mr. Constable's only fault.

Next to this official dwelling is a spruce brick tenement, red, high, and narrow, boasting, one above another, three sash windows, the only sash windows in the village, with a clematis on one side and a rose on the other, tall and narrow like itself. That slender mansion has a fine genteel look. The little parlour seems made for Hogarth's old maid and her stunted footboy; for tea and card-parties,—it would just hold one table: for the rustle of faded silks, and the splendour of old China; for the delight of four by honours, and a little snug quiet scandal between the deals; for affected gentility and real starvation. This should have been its destiny; but fate has been unpropitious: it belongs to a plump, merry, bustling dame, with four fat, rosy, noisy children, the very essence of vulgarity and plenty.

Then comes the village shop, like other village shops, multifarious as a bazaar; a repository for bread, shoes, tea, cheese, tape, ribands, and bacon; for every thing, in short, except the one particular thing which you happen to want at the moment, and will be sure not to find. The people are civil and thriving, and frugal withal; they have let the upper part of their house to two young women (one of them is a pretty blue-eyed girl) who teach little children their A B C, and make caps and gowns for their mammas,—parcel schoolmistress, parcel mantuamaker. I believe they find adorning the body a more profitable vocation than adorning the mind.

Divided from the shop by a narrow yard, and opposite the shoemaker's, is a habitation, of whose inmates I shall say nothing. A cottage — no — a miniature house, with many additions, little odds and ends of places, pantries, and what not; all angles, and of a charming in-and-outness; a little bricked court before one half, and a little flower-yard before the other; the walls old and weather-stained, covered with hollyhocks, roses, honey-suckles, and a great apricot tree; the casements full of geraniums; (ah, there is our superb white cat peeping out from amongst them!) the closets (our landlord has the assurance to call them rooms) full of contrivances and corner-cupboards; and the little garden behind full of common flowers, tulips, pinks, larkspurs, pionies, stocks, and carnations, with an arbour of privet, not unlike a sentry-box, where one lives in a delicious green light, and looks out on the gayest of all gay flower-beds. That house was built on purpose to show in what an exceedingly small compass comfort may be packed. Well, I will loiter there no longer.

The next tenement is a place of importance, the Rose inn; a white-washed building, retired from the road behind its fine swinging sign, with a little bow-window room coming out on one side, and forming, with our stable on the other, a sort of open square, which is the constant resort of carts, wagons, and return chaises. There are two carts there now, and mine host is serving them with beer in his eternal red waistcoat. He is a thriving man, and a portly, as his waistcoat attests, which has been twice let out within this twelvemonth. Our landlord has a stirring wife, a hopeful son, and a daughter, the belle of the village; not so pretty as the fair nymph of the shoe-shop, and far less elegant, but ten times as fine; all curl-papers in the morning, like a porcupine, all curls in the afternoon, like a poodle, with more flounces than curl-papers, and more lovers than curls. Miss Phœbe is fitter for town than country; and, to do her justice, she has a consciousness of that fitness, and turns her steps town-ward as often as she can. She is gone to B—— to-day with her last and principal lover, a recruiting serjeant — a man as tall as Serjeant Kite, and as impudent. Some day or other he will carry off Miss Phœbe.

In a line with the bow-window room is a low garden wall, belonging to a house under repair:—the white house opposite the collar-maker's shop, with four lime trees before it, and a wagon-load of bricks at the door.—That house is the plaything of a wealthy, well-meaning, whimsical person, who lives about a mile off. He has a passion for brick and mortar, and, being too wise to meddle with his own residence, diverts himself with altering and re-altering, improving and re-improving, doing and undoing here. It is a perfect Penelope's web. Carpenters and bricklayers have been at work for these eighteen months, and yet I sometimes stand and wonder whether any thing has really been done. One exploit in last June was, however, by no means equivocal. Our good neighbour fancied that the limes shaded the rooms, and made them dark, (there was not a creature in the house but the workmen,) so he had all the leaves stripped from every tree. There they stood, poor miserable skeletons, as bare as Christmas under the glowing midsummer sun. Nature revenged herself in her own sweet and gracious manner; fresh leaves sprang out, and at early Christmas the foliage was as brilliant as when the outrage was committed.

Next door lives a carpenter, "famed ten miles round, and worthy all his fame,"—few cabinet-makers surpass him, with his excellent wife, and their little daughter Lizzy, the plaything and queen of the village, a child three years old according to the register, but six in size and strength and intellect, in power and in self-will. She manages every body in the place, her schoolmistress included; turns the wheeler's children out of their own little cart, and makes them draw her; seduces cakes and lollypops from the very shop-window; makes the lazy carry her, the silent talk to her, the grave romp with her; does any thing she pleases; is absolutely irresistible. Her chief attraction lies in her exceeding power of loving, and her firm reliance on the love and indulgence of others. How impossible it would be to disappoint the dear little girl when she runs to meet you, slides her pretty hand into yours, looks up gladly in your face, and says, "Come!" You must go: you cannot help it. Another part of her charm is her singular beauty. Together with a good deal of the character of Napoleon, she has something of his square, sturdy, upright form, with the finest limbs in the world, a complexion purely English, a round laughing face, sunburnt and rosy, large merry blue eyes, curling brown hair, and a wonderful play of countenance. She has the imperial attitudes too, and loves to stand with her hands behind her, or folded over her bosom; and sometimes, when she has a little touch of shyness, she clasps them together on the top of her head, pressing down her shining curls, and looking so exquisitely pretty! Yes, Lizzy is queen of the village! She has but one rival in her dominions, a certain white grey-hound called May-flower, much her friend, who resembles her in beauty and strength, in playfulness, and almost in sagacity, and reigns over the animal world as she over the human. They are both coming with me, Lizzy and Lizzy's "pretty May." We are now at the end of the street; a cross lane, a rope-walk, shaded

with limes and oaks, and a cool clear pond overhung with elms, lead us to the bottom of the hill. There is still one house round the corner, ending in a picturesque wheeler's shop. The dwelling-house is more ambitious. Look at the fine flowered window-blinds, the green door with the brass knocker, and the somewhat prim but very civil person, who is sending off a labouring man with sirs and curtsies enough for a prince of the blood. Those are the curate's lodgings—apartments, his landlady would call them: he lives with his own family four miles off, but once or twice a week he comes to his neat little parlour to write sermons, to marry, or to bury, as the case may require. Never were better or kinder people than his host and hostess; and there is a reflection of clerical importance about them, since their connection with the church, which is quite edifying — a decorum, a gravity, a solemn politeness. Oh, to see the worthy wheeler carry the gown after his lodger on a Sunday, nicely pinned up in his wife's best handkerchief! — or to hear him rebuke a squalling child or a squabbling woman! The curate is nothing to him. He is fit to be perpetual churchwarden.

We must now cross the lane into the shady rope-walk. That pretty white cottage opposite, which stands straggling at the end of the village, in a garden full of flowers, belongs to our mason, the shortest of men, and his handsome, tall wife: he, a dwarf, with the voice of a giant; one starts when he begins to talk as if he were shouting through a speaking-trumpet; she, the sister, daughter, and granddaughter, of a long line of gardeners, and no contemptible one herself. It is very magnanimous in me not to hate her; for she beats me in my own way, in chrysanthemums, and dahlias, and the like gauds. Her plants are sure to live; mine have a sad trick of dying, perhaps because I love them, "not wisely, but too well," and kill them with over-kindness. Half-way up the hill is another detached cottage, the residence of an officer and his beautiful family. That eldest boy, who is hanging over the gate, and looking with such intense childish admiration at my Lizzy, might be a model for a Cupid.

How pleasantly the road winds up the hill, with its broad green borders and hedge-rows so thickly timbered! How finely the evening sun falls on that sandy excavated bank, and touches the farm-house on the top of the eminence! and how clearly defined and relieved is the figure of the man who is just coming down! It is poor John Evans, the gardener — an excellent gardener till about ten years ago, when he lost his wife, and became insane. He was sent to St. Luke's, and dismissed as cured; but his power was gone and his strength; he could no longer manage a garden, nor submit to the restraints, nor encounter the fatigue of regular employment; so he retreated to the work-house, the pensioner and factotum of the village, amongst whom he divides his services. His mind often wanders, intent on some fantastic and impracticable plan, and lost to present objects; but he is perfectly harmless, and full of a child-like simplicity, a smiling contentedness, a most touching gratitude. Every one is kind to John Evans, for there is that about him which must be loved; and his unprotectedness, his utter defencelessness, have an irresistible claim on every better feeling. I know nobody who inspires so deep and tender a pity; he improves all around him. He is useful, too, to the extent of his little power; will do any thing, but loves gardening best, and still piques himself on his old arts of pruning fruit-trees, and raising cucumbers. He is the happiest of men just now, for he has the management of a melon bed—a melon bed! — fie! What a grand pompous name was that for three melon plants under a hand-light! John Evans is sure that they will succeed. We shall see: as the chancellor said, "I doubt."

We are on the very brow of the eminence close to the Hill-house and its beautiful garden. On the outer edge of the paling, hanging over the bank that skirts the road, is an old thorn — such a thorn! The long sprays covered with snowy blossoms, so graceful, so elegant, so lightsome, and yet so rich! There only wants a pool under the thorn to give a still lovelier reflection, quivering and trembling, like a tuft of feathers, whiter and greener than the life, and more prettily mixed with the bright blue sky. There should indeed be a pool; but on the dark grass-plat, under the high bank, which is crowned by that magnificent plume, there is something that does almost as well, — Lizzy and May-flower in the midst of a game at romps, "making a sun-shine in the shady place;" Lizzy rolling, laughing, clapping her hands, and glowing like a rose; May-flower playing about her like summer lightning, dazzling the eyes with her sudden turns, her leaps, her bounds, her attacks and her escapes. She darts round the lovely little girl, with the same momentary touch that the swallow skims over the water, and has exactly the same power of flight, the same matchless ease and strength and grace. What a pretty picture they would make; what a pretty foreground they do make to the real landscape! The road winding down the hill with a slight bend, like that in the High-street at Oxford; a wagon slowly ascending, and a horseman passing it at a full trot — (ah! Lizzy, May-flower will certainly desert you to have a gambol with that blood-horse!) — half-way down, just at the turn, the red cottage of the lieutenant, covered with vines, the very image of comfort and content; farther down, on the opposite side, the small white dwelling of

the little mason; then the limes and the rope-walk; then the village street, peeping through the trees, whose clustering tops hide all but the chimneys, and various roofs of the houses, and here and there some angle of a wall: farther on, the elegant town of B——, with its fine old church towers and spires; the whole view shut in by a range of chalky hills; and over every part of the picture, trees so profusely scattered, that it appears like a woodland scene, with glades and villages intermixed. The trees are of all kinds and all hues, chiefly the finely shaped elm, of so deep and bright a green, the tips of whose high outer branches droop down with such a crisp and garland-like richness, and the oak, whose stately form is just now so splendidly adorned by the sunny colouring of the young leaves. Turning again up the hill, we find ourselves on that peculiar charm of English scenery, a green common, divided by the road; the right side fringed by hedge-rows and trees, with cottages and farm-houses irregularly placed, and terminated by a double avenue of noble oaks: the left, prettier still, dappled by bright pools of water, and islands of cottages and cottage-gardens, and sinking gradually down to corn-fields and meadows, and an old farm-house, with pointed roofs and clustered chimneys, looking out from its blooming orchard, and backed by woody hills. The common is itself the prettiest part of the prospect; half covered with low furze, whose golden blossoms reflect so intensely the last beams of the setting sun, and alive with cows and sheep, and two sets of cricketers: one of young men, surrounded with spectators, some standing, some sitting, some stretched on the grass, all taking a delightful interest in the game; the other, a merry group of little boys, at an humble distance, for whom even cricket is scarcely lively enough, shouting, leaping, and enjoying themselves to their hearts' content. But cricketers and country boys are too important persons in our village to be talked of merely as figures in the landscape. They deserve an individual introduction—an essay to themselves—and they shall have it. No fear of forgetting the good-humoured faces that meet us in our walks every day.

HANNAH.

The prettiest cottage on our village-green is the little dwelling of Dame Wilson. It stands in a corner of the common, where the hedge-rows go curving off into a sort of bay round a clear bright pond, the earliest haunt of the swallow. A deep, woody, green lane, such as Hobbima or Ruydsdael might have painted, a lane that hints of nightingales, forms one boundary of the garden, and a sloping meadow of the other: whilst the cottage itself, a low thatched irregular building, backed by a blooming orchard, and covered with honeysuckle and jessamine, looks like the chosen abode of snugness and comfort. And so it is.

Dame Wilson was a respected servant in a most respectable family, where she passed all the early part of her life, and which she quitted only on her marriage with a man of character and industry, and of that peculiar universality of genius which forms, what is called in our country phrase, a handy fellow. He could do any sort of work; was thatcher, carpenter, bricklayer, painter, gardener, gamekeeper, "every thing by turns, and nothing long." No job came amiss to him. He killed pigs, mended shoes, cleaned clocks, doctored cows, dogs, and horses, and even went so far as bleeding and drawing teeth in his experiments on the human subject. In addition to these multifarious talents, he was ready, obliging, and unfearing; jovial withal, and fond of good fellowship; and endowed with a promptness of resource which made him the general adviser of the stupid, the puzzled, and the timid. He was universally admitted to be the cleverest man in the parish; and his death, which happened about ten years ago, in consequence of standing in the water, drawing a pond for one neighbour, at a time when he was over-heated by loading hay for another, made quite a gap in our village commonwealth. John Wilson had no rival, and has had no successor:—for the Robert Ellis, whom certain youngsters would fain exalt to a co-partnery of fame, is simply nobody—a bell-ringer, a ballad-singer—a troller of profane catches—a fiddler—a bruiser—a loller on alehouse benches—a teller of good stories—a mimic—a poet!—What is all this to compare with the solid parts of John Wilson? Whose clock hath Robert Ellis cleaned?—whose windows hath he mended?—whose dog hath he broken?—whose pigs hath he rung?—whose pond hath he fished?—whose hay hath he saved?—whose cow hath he cured?—whose calf hath he killed?—whose teeth hath he drawn—whom hath he bled? Tell me that, irreverent whipsters! No! John Wilson is not to be replaced. He was missed by the whole parish; and most of all he was missed at home. His excellent wife was left the sole guardian and protector of two fatherless girls; one an infant at her knee, the other a pretty handy lass about nine years old. Cast thus upon the world, there must have been much to endure, much to suffer; but it was borne with a smiling patience, a hopeful cheeriness of spirit, and a decent pride, which seemed to command success as well as respect in their struggle for independence. Without assistance of any sort, by needle-work, by washing and mending lace and fine linen, and other skilful and profitable labours, and by the produce of her orchard and poultry, Dame Wilson contrived to main-

tain herself and her children in their own comfortable home. There was no visible change; she and the little girls were as neat as ever; the house had still within and without the same sunshiny cleanliness, and the garden was still famous over all other gardens for its cloves, and stocks, and double wall-flowers. But the sweetest flower of the garden, the joy and pride of her mother's heart, was her daughter Hannah. Well might she be proud of her! At sixteen Hannah Wilson was, beyond doubt, the prettiest girl in the village, and the best. Her beauty was quite in a different style from the common country rosebud—far more choice and rare. Its chief characteristic was modesty. A light youthful figure, exquisitely graceful and rapid in all its movements; springy, elastic, and buoyant as a bird, and almost as shy; a fair innocent face with downcast blue eyes, and smiles and blushes coming and going almost with her thoughts; a low soft voice, sweet even in its monosyllables; a dress remarkable for neatness and propriety, and borrowing from her delicate beauty an air of superiority not its own;—such was the outward woman of Hannah. Her mind was very like her person; modest, graceful, gentle, affectionate, grateful, and generous above all. The generosity of the poor is always a very real and fine thing; they give what they want; and Hannah was of all poor people the most generous. She loved to give; it was her pleasure, her luxury. Rosy-cheeked apples, plums with the bloom on them, nosegays of cloves and blossomed myrtle: these were offerings which Hannah delighted to bring to those whom she loved, or those who had shown her kindness; whilst to such of her neighbours as needed other attentions than fruit and flowers, she would give her time, her assistance, her skill; for Hannah inherited her mother's dexterity in feminine employments, with something of her father's versatile power. Besides being an excellent laundress, she was accomplished in all the arts of the needle, millinery, dress-making, and plain work; a capital cutter-out, an incomparable mender, and endowed with a gift of altering, which made old things better than new. She had no rival at a *rifacimento*, as half the turned gowns on the common can witness. As a dairy-woman, and a rearer of pigs and poultry, she was equally successful: none of her ducks and turkeys ever died of neglect or carelessness, or, to use the phrase of the poultry-yard on such occasions, of "ill luck." Hannah's fowls never dreamed of sliding out of the world in such an ignoble way; they all lived to be killed, to make a noise at their deaths, as chickens should do. She was also a famous "scholar;" kept accounts, wrote bills, read letters, and answered them; was a trusty accomptant, and a safe confidante. There was no end to Hannah's usefulness or Hannah's kindness; and her prudence was equal to either. Except to be kind or useful, she never left home; attended no fairs, or revels, or Mayings; went no where but to church; and seldom made a nearer approach to rustic revelry than by standing at her own garden-gate on a Sunday evening, with her little sister in her hand, to look at the lads and lasses on the green. In short, our village beauty had fairly reached her twentieth year without a sweetheart, without the slightest suspicion of her having ever written a love-letter on her own account; when, all on a sudden, appearances changed. She was missing at the "accustomed gate;" and one had seen a young man go into Dame Wilson's; and another had descried a trim elastic figure walking, not unaccompanied, down the shady lane. Matters were quite clear. Hannah had gotten a lover; and, when poor little Susan, who deserted by her sister, ventured to peep rather nearer to the gay group, was laughingly questioned on the subject, the hesitating No, and the half Yes, of the smiling child, were equally conclusive.

Since the new marriage act,* we, who belong to country magistrates, have gained a priority over the rest of the parish in matrimonial news. We (the privileged) see on a work-day the names which the sabbath announces to the generality. Many a blushing awkward pair hath our little lame clerk (a sorry Cupid) ushered in between dark and light to stammer and hacker, to bow and curtsey, to sign or make a mark, as it pleases Heaven. One Saturday, at the usual hour, the limping clerk made his appearance; and, walking through our little hall, I saw a fine athletic young man, the very image of health and vigour, mental and bodily, holding the hand of a young woman, who, with her head half buried in a geranium in the window, was turning bashfully away, listening, and yet not seeming to listen, to his tender whispers. The shrinking grace of that bending figure was not to be mistaken. "Hannah!" and she walked aside with me, and a rapid series of questions and answers conveyed the story of the courtship. "William was," said Hannah, "a journeyman hatter in B. He had walked over one Sunday evening to see the cricketing, and then he came again. Her mother liked him. Every body liked her William — and she had promised — she was going — was it wrong?" — "Oh no! — and where are you to live?"—"William has got a room in B. He works for Mr. Smith, the rich hatter in the market-place, and Mr. Smith speaks of him—oh, so well! But William will not tell me where our room is. I suppose in some narrow street or lane, which he is afraid I shall not like, as our common is so

* It is almost unnecessary to observe that this little story was written during the short life of that whimsical experiment in legislation.

pleasant. He little thinks — any where." She stopped suddenly; but her blush and her clasped hands finished the sentence, "any where with him!"—"And when is the happy day?" — "On Monday fortnight, Madam," said the bridegroom elect, advancing with the little clerk to summon Hannah to the parlour, "the earliest day possible." He drew her arm through his, and we parted.

The Monday fortnight was a glorious morning; one of those rare November days when the sky and the air are soft and bright as in April. "What a beautiful day for Hannah!" was the first exclamation of the breakfast table. "Did she tell you where they should dine?" — "No, Ma'am; I forgot to ask."— "I can tell you," said the master of the house, with somewhat of good-humoured importance in his air, somewhat of the look of a man who, having kept a secret as long as it was necessary, is not sorry to get rid of the burthen. — "I can tell you: in London." — "In London!"—"Yes. Your little favourite has been in high luck. She has married the only son of one of the best and richest men in B., Mr. Smith, the great hatter. It is quite a romance," continued he: "William Smith walked over one Sunday evening to see a match at cricket. He saw our pretty Hannah, and forgot to look at the cricketers. After having gazed his fill, he approached to address her, and the little damsel was off like a bird. William did not like her the less for that, and thought of her the more. He came again and again; and at last contrived to tame this wild dove, and even to get the *entrée* of the cottage. Hearing Hannah talk, is not the way to fall out of love with her. So William, at last finding his case serious, laid the matter before his father, and requested his consent to the marriage. Mr. Smith was at first a little startled; but William is an only son, and an excellent son; and, after talking with me, and looking at Hannah, (I believe her sweet face was the more eloquent advocate of the two,) he relented; and having a spice of his son's romance, finding that he had not mentioned his situation in life, he made a point of its being kept secret till the wedding-day. We have managed the business of settlements; and William, having discovered that his fair bride has some curiosity to see London (a curiosity, by the by, which I suspect she owes to you or poor Lucy), intends taking her thither for a fortnight. He will then bring her home to one of the best houses in B., a fine garden, fine furniture, fine clothes, fine servants, and more money than she will know what to do with. Really the surprise of Lord E.'s farmer's daughter, when, thinking she had married his steward, he brought her to Burleigh, and installed her as its mistress, could hardly have been greater. I hope the shock will not kill Hannah though, as is said to have been the case with that poor lady."— "Oh no! Hannah loves her husband too well. Any where with him!"

And I was right. Hannah has survived the shock. She is returned to B., and I have been to call on her. I never saw any thing so delicate and bride-like as she looked in her white gown and her lace mob, in a room light and simple, and tasteful and elegant, with nothing fine except some beautiful greenhouse plants. Her reception was a charming mixture of sweetness and modesty, a little more respectful than usual, and far more shamefaced! Poor thing! her cheeks must have pained her! But this was the only difference. In every thing else she is still the same Hannah, and has lost none of her old habits of kindness and gratitude. She was making a handsome matronly cap, evidently for her mother; and spoke, even with tears, of her new father's goodness to her and to Susan. She would fetch the cake and wine herself, and would gather, in spite of all remonstrance, some of her choicest flowers as a parting nosegay. She did, indeed, just hint at her troubles with visiters and servants — how strange and sad it was! seemed distressed at ringing the bell, and visibly shrank from the sound of a double knock. But, in spite of these calamities, Hannah is a happy woman. The double rap was her husband's, and the glow on her cheek, and the smile of her lips and eyes when he appeared, spoke more plainly than ever, "Any where with him!"

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

FROST.

January 23d. — At noon to-day, I and my white greyhound, May-flower, set out for a walk into a very beautiful world, — a sort of silent fairy land, — a creation of that matchless magician the hoar-frost. There had been just snow enough to cover the earth and all its colours with one sheet of pure and uniform white, and just time enough since the snow had fallen to allow the hedges to be freed of their fleecy load, and clothed with a delicate coating of rime. The atmosphere was deliciously calm; soft, even mild, in spite of the thermometer; no perceptible air, but a stillness that might almost be felt; the sky, rather grey than blue, throwing out in bold relief the snow-covered roofs of our village, and the rimy trees that rise above them, and the sun shining dimly as through a veil, giving a pale fair light, like the moon, only brighter. There was a silence, too, that might become the moon, as we stood at our little gate looking up the quiet street; a sabbath-like pause of work and play, rare on a work-day; nothing was audible but the pleasant hum of frost, that low monotonous sound, which is perhaps

the nearest approach that life and nature can make to absolute silence. The very wagons, as they come down the hill along the beaten track of crisp yellowish frost-dust, glide along like shadows; even May's bounding footsteps, at her height of glee and of speed, fall like snow upon snow.

But we shall have noise enough presently: May has stopped at Lizzy's door: and Lizzy, as she sate on the window-sill, with her bright rosy face laughing through the casement, has seen her and disappeared. She is coming. No! The key is turning in the door, and sounds of evil omen issue through the key-hole — sturdy 'let-me-outs,' and 'I will gos,' mixed with shrill cries on May and on me from Lizzy, piercing through a low continuous harangue, of which the prominent parts are apologies, chilblains, sliding, broken bones, lollypops, rods, and gingerbread, from Lizzy's careful mother. 'Don't scratch the door, May! Don't roar so, my Lizzy! We'll call for you, as we come back.' — 'I'll go now! Let me out! I will go!' are the last words of Miss Lizzy. Mem.—Not to spoil that child — if I can help it. But I do think her mother might have let the poor little soul walk with us to-day. Nothing worse for children than coddling. Nothing better for chilblains than exercise. Besides, I don't believe she has any—and as to breaking her bones in sliding, I don't suppose there 's a slide on the common. These murmuring cogitations have brought us up the hill, and half-way across the light and airy common, with its bright expanse of snow and its clusters of cottages, whose turf fires send such wreaths of smoke sailing up the air, and diffuse such aromatic fragrance around. And now comes the delightful sound of childish voices, ringing with glee and merriment almost from beneath our feet. Ah, Lizzy, your mother was right! They are shouting from that deep irregular pool, all glass now, where, on two long, smooth, liny slides, half a dozen ragged urchins are slipping along in tottering triumph. Half a dozen steps bring us to the bank right above them. May can hardly resist the temptation of joining her friends, for most of the varlets are of her acquaintance, especially the rogue who leads the slide — he with the brimless hat, whose bronzed complexion and white flaxen hair, reversing the usual lights and shadows of the human countenance, give so strange and foreign a look to his flat and comic features. This hobgoblin, Jack Rapley by name, is May's great crony; and she stands on the brink of the steep irregular descent, her black eyes fixed full upon him, as if she intended him the favour of jumping on his head. She does: she is down and upon him; but Jack Rapley is not easily to be knocked off his feet. He saw her coming, and in the moment of her leap sprang dexterously off the slide on the rough ice, steadying himself by the shoulder of the next in the file, which unlucky follower, thus unexpectedly checked in his career, fell plump backwards, knocking down the rest of the line like a nest of card-houses. There is no harm done; but there they lie roaring, kicking, sprawling, in every attitude of comic distress, whilst Jack Rapley and May-flower, sole authors of this calamity, stand apart from the throng, fondling, and coquetting, and complimenting each other, and very visibly laughing, May in her black eyes, Jack in his wide close-shut mouth, and his whole monkey-face, at their comrades' mischances. I think, Miss May, you may as well come up again, and leave Master Rapley to fight your battles. He'll get out of the scrape. He is a rustic wit — a sort of Robin Goodfellow — the sauciest, idlest, cleverest, best-natured boy in the parish; always foremost in mischief, and always ready to do a good turn. The sages of our village predict sad things of Jack Rapley, so that I am sometimes a little ashamed to confess, before wise people, that I have a lurking predilection for him, (in common with other naughty ones), and that I like to hear him talk to May almost as well as she does. 'Come, May!' and up she springs as light as a bird. The road is gay now; carts and post-chaises, and girls in red cloaks, and, afar off, looking almost like a toy, the coach. It meets us fast and soon. How much happier the walkers look than the riders — especially the frost-bitten gentleman, and the shivering lady with the invisible face, sole passengers of that commodious machine! Hooded, veiled, and bonneted as she is, one sees from her attitude how miserable she would look uncovered.

Another pond, and another noise of children. More sliding? Oh! no. This is a sport of higher pretension. Our good neighbour, the lieutenant, skating, and his own pretty little boys, and two or three other four-year-old elves, standing on the brink in an ecstasy of joy and wonder! Oh! what happy spectators! And what a happy performer! They admiring, he admired, with an ardour and sincerity never excited by all the quadrilles and the spread-eagles of the Seine and the Serpentine. He really skates well though, and I am glad I came this way; for, with all the father's feelings sitting gaily at his heart, it must still gratify the pride of skill to have one spectator at that solitary pond who has seen skating before.

Now we have reached the trees,—the beautiful trees! never so beautiful as to-day. Imagine the effect of a straight and regular double avenue of oaks, nearly a mile long, arching over head, and closing into perspective like the roof and columns of a cathedral, every tree and branch encrusted with the bright and delicate congelation of hoar-frost, white and pure as snow, delicate and defined as carved ivory. How beautiful it is, how

uniform, how various, how filling, how satiating to the eye and to the mind—above all, how melancholy! There is a thrilling awfulness, an intense feeling of simple power in that naked and colourless beauty, which falls on the heart like the thought of death—death pure, and glorious, and smiling,—but still death. Sculpture has always the same effect on my imagination, and painting never. Colour is life.—We are now at the end of this magnificent avenue, and at the top of a steep eminence commanding a wide view over four counties—a landscape of snow. A deep lane leads abruptly down the hill; a mere narrow cart-track, sinking between high banks clothed with fern and furze and low broom, crowned with luxuriant hedgerows, and famous for their summer smell of thyme. How lovely these banks are now—the tall weeds and the gorse fixed and stiffened in the hoar frost, which fringes round the bright prickly holly, the pendent foliage of the bramble, and the deep orange leaves of the pollard oaks! Oh, this is rime in its loveliest form! And there is still a berry here and there on the holly, "blushing in its natural coral" through the delicate tracery, still a stray hip or haw for the birds who abound here always. The poor birds, how tame they are, how sadly tame! There is the beautiful and rare crested wren, "that shadow of a bird," as White of Selborne calls it, perched in the middle of the hedge, nestling as it were amongst the cold bare boughs, seeking, poor pretty thing, for the warmth it will not find. And there, farther on, just under the bank, by the slender runlet, which still trickles between its transparent fantastic margin of thin ice, as if it were a thing of life,—there, with a swift, scudding motion, flits, in short low flights, the gorgeous kingfisher, its magnificent plumage of scarlet and blue flashing in the sun, like the glories of some tropical bird. He is come for water to this little spring by the hill side,—water which even his long bill and slender head can hardly reach, so nearly do the fantastic forms of those garland-like icy margins meet over the tiny stream beneath. It is rarely that one sees the shy beauty so close or so long; and it is pleasant to see him in the grace and beauty of his natural liberty, the only way to look at a bird. We used, before we lived in a street, to fix a little board outside the parlour-window, and cover it with bread-crums in the hard weather. It was quite delightful to see the pretty things come and feed, to conquer their shyness, and do away their mistrust. First came the more social tribes, "the robin red-breast and the wren," cautiously, suspiciously, picking up a crum on the wing, with the little keen bright eye fixed on the window; then they would stop for two pecks; then stay till they were satisfied. The shyer birds, tamed by their example, came next; and at last one saucy fellow of a blackbird—a sad glutton, he would clear the board in two minutes,—used to tap his yellow bill against the window for more. How we loved the fearless confidence of that fine, frank-hearted creature! And surely he loved us. I wonder the practice is not more general.—"May! May! naughty May!" She has frightened away the kingfisher; and now, in her coaxing penitence, she is covering me with snow. "Come, pretty May! it is time to go home!"

THAW.

January 28th.—We have had rain, and snow, and frost, and rain again; four days of absolute confinement. Now it is a thaw and a flood; but our light gravelly soil, and country boots, and country hardihood, will carry us through. What a dripping, comfortless day it is! just like the last days of November: no sun, no sky, grey or blue; one low, overhanging, dark, dismal cloud, like London smoke: Mayflower is out coursing too, and Lizzy gone to school. Never mind. Up the hill again! Walk we must. Oh what a watery world to look back upon! Thames, Kennet, Loddon—all overflowed; our famous town, inland once, turned into a sort of Venice; C. park converted into an island; and the long range of meadows from B. to W. one huge unnatural lake, with trees growing out of it! Oh what a watery world!—I will look at it no longer. I will walk on. The road is alive again. Noise is reborn. Wagons creak, horses plash, carts rattle, and pattens paddle through the dirt with more than their usual clink. The common has its old fine tints of green and brown, and its old variety of inhabitants,—horses, cows, sheep, pigs, and donkeys. The ponds are unfrozen, except where some melancholy piece of melting ice floats sullenly upon the water; and cackling geese and gabbling ducks have replaced the lieutenant and Jack Rapley. The avenue is chill and dark, the hedges are dripping, the lanes knee-deep, and all nature is in a state of "dissolution and thaw."

MODERN ANTIQUES.

Early in the present century there lived in the ancient town of B. two complete and remarkable specimens of the ladies of eighty years ago—ladies cased inwardly and outwardly in Addison and whalebone. How they had been preserved in this entireness, amidst the collision and ridicule of a country town, seemed as puzzling a question as the preservation of bees in amber, or mummies in pyramids, or any other riddle that serves to amuse the naturalist or the antiquarian. But so it was. They were old maids and sisters, and so alike in their difference from all other

women, that they may be best described together; any little non-resemblance may be noted afterwards; it was no more than nature, prodigal of variety, would make in two leaves from the same oak-tree.

Both, then, were as short as women well could be without being entitled to the name of dwarf, or carried about to fairs for a show; —both were made considerably shorter by the highest of all high heels, and the tallest of all tall caps, each of which artificial elevations was as ostentatiously conspicuous as the legs and cover of a pipkin, and served equally to add to the squatness of the real machine: both were lean, wrinkled, withered, and old; both enveloped their aged persons in the richest silks, displayed over large hoops, and stays the tightest and stiffest that ever pinched in a beauty of George the Second's reign. The gown was of that make formerly, I believe, called a sacque, and of a pattern so enormous, that one flower with its stalk and leaves, would nearly cover the three quarters of a yard in length, of which the tail might, at a moderate computation, consist. Over this they wore a gorgeously figured apron, whose flourishing white embroidery vied in size with the plants on the robe; a snowy muslin neckerchief, rigidly pinned down: and over that a black lace tippet of the same shape, parting at the middle, to display a grey breast-knot. The riband of which this last decoration was composed, was generally of the same hue with that which adorned the towering lappeted cap, a sort of poppy colour, which they called Pompadour. The sleeves were cut off below the elbows with triple ruffles of portentous length. Brown leather mittens, with peaks turned back, and lined with blue satin, and a variety of tall rings in an odd, out-of-fashion variety of enamelling, and figures of hair, completed the decoration of their hands and arms. The carriage of these useful members was at least equally singular; they had adapted themselves in a very remarkable manner to the little taper wasp-like point in which the waist ended, to which the elbows, ruffle and all, adhered as closely as if they had been glued, whilst the ringed and mittened hands, when not employed in knitting, were crossed saltier-wise, in front of the apron. The other termination of their figure was adorned with black stuff shoes, very peaked, with points upwards, and massive silver buckles. Their walking costume was, in winter, a black silk cloak, lined with rabbit-skins, with holes for the arms; in summer, another tippet and a calash, — no bonnet could hold the turreted cap. Their motion out of doors was indescribable; it most nearly resembled sailing. They seemed influenced by the wind in a way incidental to no moving thing, except a ship or a shuttlecock; and, indeed, one boisterous blowing night, about the equinox, when standing on some high stone steps, waiting for a carriage to take her home from a party, the wind did catch one of them, and, but for the intervention of a tall footman, who seized her as one would seize a fly-away umbrella, and held her down by main force, the poor little lady would have been carried up like an air-balloon. Her feelings must have been pretty much similar to those of Gulliver in Brobdignag, when flown away with by the eagle. Half a minute later, and she was gone.

So far they were exact counterparts. The chief variation lay in the face. Amidst the general hue of age and wrinkles, you could just distinguish that Mrs. Theodosia had been brown, and Mrs. Frances fair. There was a yellow shine here and there amongst the white hairs, curiously rolled over a cushion high above the forehead, that told of Fanny's golden locks; whilst the purely grey rouleau of Mrs. Theodosia showed its mixture of black and white still plainer. Mrs. Frances, too, had the blue eye, with a laughing light, which so often retains its flash to extreme age; whilst Mrs. Theodosia's orbs, bright no longer, had once been hazel. Mrs. Theodosia's aquiline nose, and long sociable chin, evinced that disposition to meet which is commonly known by the name of a pair of nut-crackers; Mrs. Frances' features, on the other hand, were rather terse and sharp. Still there was in spite of these material differences, that look of kindred, that inexplicable and indefinable family likeness, which is so frequently found in sisters; greatly increased in the present case by a similarity in the voice that was quite startling. Both tongues were quick and clear, and high and rattling, to a degree that seemed rather to belong to machinery than to human articulation; and when welcomes and how-d'ye dos were pouring both at once on either side, a stranger was apt to gaze in ludicrous perplexity, as if beset by a ventriloquist, or haunted by strange echoes. When the immediate cackle subsided, they were easily distinguished. Mrs. Theodosia was good, and kind, and hospitable, and social; Mrs. Frances was all that, and was besides shrewd, and clever, and literary, to a degree not very common in her day, though not approaching to the pitch of a blue-stocking lady of the present. Accident was partly the cause of this unusual love of letters. They had known Richardson; had been admitted amongst his flower-garden of young ladies; and still talked familiarly of Miss Highmore, Miss Fielding, Miss Collier, and Miss Mulso, — they had never learned to call her Mrs. Chapone. Latterly the taste had been renewed and quickened, by their having the honour of a distant relationship to one of the most amiable and unfortunate of modern poets. So Mrs. Frances studied novels and poetry, in addition to her sister's sermons and cookery books; though (as she used to boast) without doing a stitch the less knitting, or playing a

pool the fewer in the course of the year. Their usual occupations were those of other useful old ladies; superintending the endowed girls' school of the town with a vigilance and a jealousy of abuses that might have done honour to Mr. Hume; taking an active part in the more private charities, donations of flannel petticoats, or the loan of baby-things; visiting in a quiet way; and going to church whenever the church-door was open.

Their abode was a dwelling ancient and respectable, like themselves, that looked as if it had never undergone the slightest variation, inside or out, since they had been born in it. The rooms were many, low, and small; full of little windows with little panes, and chimneys stuck perversely in the corners. The furniture was exactly to correspond; little patches of carpets in the middle of the slippery, dry-rubbed floors; tables and chairs of mahogany, black with age, but exceedingly neat and bright; and Japan cabinets and old China, which Mr. Beckford might have envied—treasures which had either never gone out of fashion, or had come in again. The garden was beautiful, and beautifully placed; a series of terraces descending to rich and finely timbered meadows, through which the slow magnificent Thames rolled under the chalky hills of the pretty village of C. It was bounded on one side by the remains of an old friary, the end wall of a chapel with a Gothic window of open tracery in high preservation, as rich as point lace. It was full too of old-fashioned durable flowers, jessamine, honeysuckle, and the high-scented fraxinella; I never saw that delicious plant in such profusion. The garden walks were almost as smooth as the floors, thanks to the two assiduous serving maidens (nothing like a man-servant ever entered this maidenly abode) who attended it. One, the under damsel, was a stout strapping country wench, changed from time to time as it happened; the other was as much a fixture as her mistresses. She had lived with them for forty years, and, except being twice as big and twice as tall, might have passed for another sister. She wore their gowns, (the two just made her one,) caps, ruffles, and aprons; talked with their voices and their phrases; followed them to church, and school, and market; scolded the schoolmistress; heard the children their catechism; cut out flannel petticoats, and knit stockings to give away. Never was so complete an instance of assimilation! She had even become like them in face.

Having a brother who resided at a beautiful seat in the neighbourhood, and being to all intents and purposes of the patrician order, their visiters were very select, and rather more from the country than the town. Six formed the general number,—one table—a rubber or a pool—seldom more. As the only child of a very favourite friend, I used, during the holidays, to be admitted as a supernumerary; at first out of compliment to mamma; latterly I stood on my own merits. I was found to be a quiet little girl; an excellent hander of muffins and cakes; a connoisseur in green tea; an amateur of quadrille—the most entertaining of all games to a looker-on; and, lastly and chiefly, a great lover and admirer of certain books, which filled two little shelves at cross-corners with the chimney—namely, that volume of Cowper's Poems which contained John Gilpin, and the whole seven volumes of Sir Charles Grandison. With what delight I used to take down those dear books! It was an old edition; perhaps that very first edition which, as Mrs. Barbauld says, the fine ladies used to hold up to one another at Ranelagh,—and adorned with prints not certainly of the highest merit as works of art, but which served exceedingly to realise the story, and to make us, as it were, personally acquainted with the characters. The costume was pretty much that of my worthy hostesses, especially that of the two Miss Selbys; there was even in Miss Nancy's face a certain likeness to Mrs. Frances. I remember I used to wonder whether she carried her elbows in the same way. How I read and believed, and believed and read; and liked lady G. though I thought her naughty; and gave all my wishes to Harriet, though I thought her silly; and loved Emily with my whole heart! Clementina I did not quite understand; nor (I am half afraid to say so) do I now; and Sir Charles I positively disliked. He was the only thing in the book that I disbelieved. Those bowings seemed incredible. At last, however, I extended my faith even to him; partly influenced by the irresistibility of the author, partly by the appearance of a real living beau, who in the matter of bowing might almost have competed with Sir Charles himself. This beau was no other than the town member, who, with his brother, was, when in the country, the constant attendant at these chosen parties.

Our member was a man of seventy, or thereabout, but wonderfully young-looking, and well-preserved. It was said, indeed, that no fading belle was better versed in cosmetic secrets, or more arduously devoted to the duties of the toilet. Fresh, upright, unwrinkled, pearly-teethed, and point-device in his accoutrements, he might have passed for fifty,—and doubtless often did pass for such when apart from his old-looking younger brother, who, tall, lanky, shambling, long-visaged, and loosely dressed, gave a very vivid idea of Don Quixote when stripped of his armour. Never was so consummate a courtier as our member! Of good family and small fortune, he had early in life been seized with the desire of representing the town in which he resided; and canvassing, sheer canvassing, without eloquence, without talent, without

bribery, had brought him in and kept him in. There his ambition stopped. To be a member of parliament was with him not the means but the end of advancement. For forty years he represented an independent borough, and, though regularly voting with every successive ministry, was, at the end of his career, as poor as when he began. He never sold himself, or stood suspected of selling himself—perhaps he might sometimes give himself away. But that he could not help. It was almost impossible for him to say No to any body,—quite so to a minister, or a constituent, or a constituent's wife or daughter. So he passed bowing and smiling through the world, the most disinterested of courtiers, the most subservient of upright men, with little other annoyance than a septennial alarm—for sometimes an opposition was threatened, and sometimes it came; but then he went through a double course of smirks and hand-shakings, and all was well again. The great grievance of his life must have been the limitation in the number of franks. His apologies, when he happened to be full, were such as a man would make for a great fault; his lamentations, such as might become a great misfortune. Of course there was something ludicrous in his courtliness, but it was not contemptible; it only wanted to be obviously disinterested to become respectable. The expression might be exaggerated; but the feeling was real. He was always ready to show kindness, to the utmost of his power, to any human being. He would have been just as civil and supple if he had not been M. P. It was his vocation. He could not help it.

This excellent person was an old bachelor; and there was a rumour, some forty or fifty years old, that in the days of their bloom, there had been a little love affair, an attachment, some even said an engagement, how broken none could tell, between him and Mrs. Frances. Certain it is, that there were symptoms of flirtation still. His courtesy, always gallant to every female, had something more real and more tender towards "Fanny," as he was wont to call her; and Fanny, on her side, was as conscious as heart could desire. She blushed and bridled; fidgeted with her mittens or her apron; flirted a fan nearly as tall as herself, and held her head on one side with that peculiar air which I have noted in the shyer birds, and ladies in love. She manœuvred to get him next her at the tea-table; liked to be his partner at whist; loved to talk of him in his absence; knew to an hour the time of his return; and did not dislike a little gentle raillery on the subject — even I — But, traitress to my sex, how can I jest with such feelings? Rather let me sigh over the world of woe, that in fifty years of hopeless constancy must have passed through that maiden heart! The timid hope; the sickening suspense; the slow, slow fear; the bitter disappointment; the powerless anger; the relenting; the forgiveness; and then again, that interest, kinder, truer, more unchanging than friendship, that lingering woman's love — Oh how can I jest over such feelings! They are passed away — for she is gone, and he — but they clung by her to the last, and ceased only in death.

A GREAT FARM-HOUSE.

These are bad times for farmers. I am sorry for it. Independently of all questions of policy, as a mere matter of taste and of old association, it was a fine thing to witness the hearty hospitality, and to think of the social happiness of a great farm-house. No situation in life seemed so richly privileged; none had so much power for good and so little for evil; it seemed a place where pride could not live, and poverty could not enter. These thoughts pressed on my mind the other day, in passing the green sheltered lane, overhung with trees like an avenue, that leads to the great farm at M., where ten or twelve years ago, I used to spend so many pleasant days. I could not help advancing a few paces up the lane, and then turning to lean over the gate, seemingly gazing on the rich undulating valley, crowned with woody hills, which, as I stood under the dark and shady arch, lay bathed in the sunshine before me, but really absorbed in thoughts of other times, in recollections of the old delights of that delightful place, and of the admirable qualities of its owners. How often I had opened that gate, and how gaily — certain of meeting a smiling welcome — and what a picture of comfort it was!

Passing up the lane, we used first to encounter a thick solid suburb of ricks, of all sorts, shapes, and dimensions. Then came the farm, like a town; a magnificent series of buildings, stables, cart-houses, cow-houses, granaries and barns, that might hold half the corn of the parish, placed at angles towards each other, and mixed with smaller habitations for pigs, dogs, and poultry. They formed, together with the old substantial farm-house, a sort of amphitheatre, looking over a beautiful meadow, which swept greenly and abruptly down into fertile enclosures, richly set with hedge-row timber, oak, and ash, and elm. Both the meadow and the farm-yard swarmed with inhabitants of the earth and of the air; horses, oxen, cows, calves, heifers, sheep, and pigs; beautiful greyhounds, all manner of poultry, a tame goat, and a pet donkey.

The master of this land of plenty was well fitted to preside over it; a thick, stout man, of middle height, and middle age, with a

healthy, ruddy, square face, all alive with intelligence and good-humour. There was a lurking jest in his eye, and a smile about the corners of his firmly-closed lips, that gave assurance of good-fellowship. His voice was loud enough to have hailed a ship at sea, without the assistance of a speaking-trumpet, wonderfully rich and round in its tones, and harmonizing admirably with his bluff, jovial visage. He wore his dark shining hair combed straight over his forehead, and had a trick, when particularly merry, of stroking it down with his hand. The moment his right hand approached his head, out flew a jest.

Besides his own great farm, the business of which seemed to go on like machinery, always regular, prosperous, and unfailing — besides this and two or three constant stewardships, and a perpetual succession of arbitrations, in which, such was the influence of his acuteness, his temper, and his sturdy justice, that he was often named by both parties, and left to decide alone,—in addition to these occupations, he was a sort of standing overseer and churchwarden; he ruled his own hamlet like a despotic monarch, and took a prime minister's share in the government of the large parish to which it was attached; and one of the gentlemen, whose estates he managed, being the independent member for an independent borough, he had every now and then a contested election on his shoulders. Even that did not discompose him. He had always leisure to receive his friends at home, or to visit them abroad; to take journeys to London, or make excursions to the sea-side; was as punctual in pleasure as in business, and thought being happy and making happy as much the purpose of his life as getting rich. His great amusement was coursing. He kept several brace of capital greyhounds, so high-blooded, that I remember when five of them were confined in five different kennels on account of their ferocity. The greatest of living painters once called a greyhound, "the line of beauty in perpetual motion." Our friend's large dogs were a fine illustration of this remark. His old dog, Hector, for instance, for which he refused a hundred guineas, — what a superb dog was Hector! — a model of grace and symmetry, necked and crested like an Arabian, and bearing himself with a stateliness and gallantry that showed some "conscience of his worth." He was the largest dog I ever saw; but so finely proportioned, that the most determined fault-finder could call him neither too long nor too heavy. There was not an inch too much of him. His colour was the purest white, entirely unspotted, except that his head was very regularly and richly marked with black. Hector was certainly a perfect beauty. But the little bitches, on which his master piqued himself still more, were not, in my poor judgment, so admirable. They were pretty little round, graceful things, sleek and glossy, and for the most part milk-white, with the smallest heads, and the most dove-like eyes that were ever seen. There was a peculiar sort of innocent beauty about them, like that of a roly-poly child. They were as gentle as lambs too: all the evil spirit of the family evaporated in the gentlemen. But, to my thinking, these pretty creatures were fitter for the parlour than the field. They were strong, certainly, excellently loined, cat-footed, and chested like a war-horse; but there was a want of length about them — a want of room, as the coursers say; something a little, a very little inclining to the clumsy; a dumpiness, a pointer-look. They went off like an arrow from the bow; for the first hundred yards nothing could stand against them; then they began to flag, to find their weight too much for their speed, and to lose ground from the shortness of the stroke. Up-hill, however, they were capital. There their compactness told. They turned with the hare, and lost neither wind nor way in the sharpest ascent. I shall never forget one single-handed course of our good friend's favourite little bitch Helen, on W. hill. All the coursers were in the valley below, looking up to the hill-side as on a moving picture. I suppose she turned the hare twenty times on a piece of greensward not much bigger than an acre, and as steep as the roof of a house. It was an old hare, a famous hare, one that had baffled half the dogs in the county; but she killed him; and then, though almost as large as herself, took it up in her mouth, brought it to her master, and laid it down at his feet. Oh how pleased he was! and what a pleasure it was to see his triumph! He did not always find W. hill so fortunate. It is a high steep hill, of a conical shape, encircled by a mountain road winding up to the summit like a corkscrew, — a deep road dug out of the chalk, and fenced by high mounds on either side. The hares always make for this hollow way, as it is called, because it is too wide for a leap, and the dogs lose much time in mounting and descending the sharp acclivities. Very eager dogs, however, will sometimes dare the leap, and two of our good friend's favourite greyhounds perished in the attempt in two following years. They were found dead in the hollow way. After this he took a dislike to distant coursing meetings, and sported chiefly on his own beautiful farm.

His wife was like her husband, with a difference, as they say in heraldry. Like him in looks, only thinner and paler; like him in voice and phrase, only not so loud; like him in merriment and good-humour; like him in her talent of welcoming and making happy, and being kind; like him in cherishing an abundance of pets, and in getting through with marvellous facility an astounding quantity of business and pleasure. Perhaps the quality

in which they resembled each other most completely, was the happy ease and serenity of behaviour, so seldom found amongst people of the middle rank, who have usually a best manner and a worst, and whose best (that is, the studied, the company manner) is so very much the worst. She was frankness itself; entirely free from prickly defiance, or bristling self-love. She never took offence or gave it; never thought of herself or of what others would think of her; had never been afflicted with the besetting sins of her station, a dread of the vulgar, or an aspiration after the genteel. Those "words of fear" had never disturbed her delightful heartiness.

Her pets were her cows, her poultry, her bees, and her flowers; chiefly her poultry, almost as numerous as the bees, and as various as the flowers. The farm-yard swarmed with peacocks, turkeys, geese, tame and wild-ducks, fowls, guinea-hens, and pigeons; besides a brood or two of favourite bantams in the green court before the door, with a little ridiculous strutter of a cock at their head, who imitated the magnificent demeanour of the great Tom of the barn-yard, just as Tom in his turn copied the fierce bearing of that warlike and terrible biped the he-turkey. I am the least in the world afraid of a turkey-cock, and used to steer clear of the turkery as often as I could. Commend me to the peaceable vanity of that jewel of a bird the peacock, sweeping his gorgeous tail along the grass, or dropping it gracefully from some low-boughed tree, whilst he turns round his crested head with the air of a birth-day belle, to see who admires him. What a glorious creature it is! How thoroughly content with himself and with all the world!

Next to her poultry our good farmer's wife loved her flower-garden; and indeed it was of the very first water, the only thing about the place that was fine. She was a real genuine florist; valued pinks, tulips, and auriculas, for certain qualities of shape and colour, with which beauty had nothing to do; preferred black ranunculuses, and gave into all those obliquities of a tripled refined taste by which the professed florist contrives to keep pace with the vagaries of the bibliomaniac. Of all odd fashions, that of dark, gloomy, dingy flowers, appears to me the oddest. Your true *connoisseur* now, shall prefer a deep puce hollyhock, to the gay pink blossoms which cluster around that splendid plant like a pyramid of roses. So did she. The nomenclature of her garden was more distressing still. One is never thoroughly sociable with flowers till they are naturalized as it were, christened, provided with decent, homely, well-wearing English names. Now her plants had all sorts of heathenish appellations, which,—no offence to her learning,—always sounded wrong. I liked the bees' garden best; the plot of ground immediately round their hives, filled with common flowers for their use, and literally "redolent of sweets." Bees are insects of great taste in every way, and seem often to select for beauty as much as for flavour. They have a better eye for colour than the florist. The butterfly is also a *dilettante*. Rover though he be, he generally prefers the blossoms that become him best. What a pretty picture it is, in a sunshiny autumn day, to see a bright spotted butterfly, made up of gold and purple and splendid brown, swinging on the rich flower of the china aster!

To come back to our farm. Within doors every thing went as well as without. There were no fine misses sitting before the piano, and mixing the alloy of their new-fangled tinsel with the old sterling metal; nothing but an only son excellently brought up, a fair slim youth, whose extraordinary and somewhat pensive elegance of mind and manner was thrown into fine relief by his father's loud hilarity, and harmonized delightfully with the smiling kindness of his mother. His Spensers and Thomsons, too, looked well amongst the hyacinths and geraniums that filled the windows of the little snug room in which they usually sate; a sort of after-thought, built at an angle from the house, and looking into the farm-yard. It was closely packed with favourite arm-chairs, favourite sofas, favourite tables, and a side-board decorated with the prize-cups and collars of the greyhounds, and generally loaded with substantial work-baskets, jars of flowers, great pyramids of home-made cakes, and sparkling bottles of gooseberry-wine, famous all over the country. The walls were covered with portraits of half a dozen greyhounds, a brace of spaniels, as large as life, an old pony, and the master and mistress of the house in half-length. She as unlike as possible, prim, mincing, delicate, in lace and satin; he so staringly and ridiculously like, that when the picture fixed its good-humoured eyes upon you as you entered the room, you were almost tempted to say — how d'ye do? — Alas! the portraits are now gone, and the originals. Death and distance have despoiled that pleasant home. The garden has lost its smiling mistress; the greyhounds their kind master; and new people, new manners, and new cares, have taken possession of the old abode of peace and plenty—the great farm-house.

LUCY.

About a twelvemonth ago we had the misfortune to lose a very faithful and favourite female servant; one who has spoiled us for all others. Nobody can expect to meet with two Lucies. We all loved Lucy—poor Lucy! She did not die—she only married; but we were so sorry to part with her, that her wed-

ding, which was kept at our house, was almost as tragical as a funeral; and from pure regret and affection we sum up her merits, and bemoan our loss, just as if she had really departed this life.

Lucy's praise is a most fertile theme: she united the pleasant and amusing qualities of a French soubrette, with the solid excellence of an English woman of the old school, and was good by contraries. In the first place, she was exceedingly agreeable to look at; remarkably pretty. She lived in our family eleven years; but, having come to us very young, was still under thirty, just in full bloom, and a very brilliant bloom it was. Her figure was rather tall, and rather large, with delicate hands and feet, and a remarkable ease and vigour in her motions: I never saw any woman walk so fast or so well. Her face was round and dimpled, with sparkling grey eyes, black eye-brows and eye-lashes, a profusion of dark hair, very red lips, very white teeth, and a complexion that entirely took away the look of vulgarity which the breadth and flatness of her face might otherwise have given. Such a complexion, so pure, so finely grained, so healthily fair, with such a sweet rosiness, brightening and varying like her dancing eyes whenever she spoke or smiled! When silent, she was almost pale; but, to confess the truth, she was not often silent. Lucy liked talking, and every body liked to hear her talk. There is always great freshness and originality in an uneducated and quick-witted person, who surprises one continually by unsuspected knowledge or amusing ignorance; and Lucy had a real talent for conversation. Her light and pleasant temper, her cleverness, her universal kindness, and the admirable address, or rather the excellent feeling, with which she contrived to unite the most perfect respect with the most cordial and affectionate interest, gave a singular charm to her prattle. No confidence or indulgence—and she was well tried with both—ever made her forget herself for a moment. All our friends used to loiter at the door or in the hall to speak to Lucy, and they miss her, and ask for her, as if she were really one of the family.—She was not less liked by her equals. Her constant simplicity and right-mindedness kept her always in her place with them as with us; and her gaiety and good humour made her a most welcome visiter in every shop and cottage round. She had another qualification for village society—she was an incomparable gossip, had a rare genius for picking up news, and great liberality in its diffusion. Births, deaths, marriages, casualties, quarrels, battles, scandal—nothing came amiss to her. She could have furnished a weekly paper from her own stores of facts, without once resorting for assistance to the courts of law or the two houses of parliament. She was a very charitable reporter too; threw her own sunshine into the shady places, and would hope and doubt as long as either was possible. Her fertility of intelligence was wonderful; and so early! Her news had always the bloom on it; there was no being beforehand with Lucy. It was a little mortifying when one came prepared with something very recent and surprising, something that should have made her start with astonishment, to find her fully acquainted with the story, and able to furnish you with twenty particulars that you never heard of. But this evil had its peculiar compensation. By Lucy's aid I passed with every body, but Lucy herself, for a woman of great information, an excellent authority, an undoubted reference in all matters of gossipry. Now I lag miserably behind the time; I never hear of a death till after the funeral, nor of a wedding till I read it in the papers; and, when people talk of reports and rumours, they undo me. I should be obliged to run away from the tea-tables, if I had not taken the resolution to look wise and say nothing, and live on my old reputation. Indeed, even now Lucy's fund is not entirely exhausted; things have not quite done happening. I know nothing new; but my knowledge of by-gone passages is absolute; I can prophesy past events like a gipsy.

Scattered amongst her great merits Lucy had a few small faults, as all persons should have. She had occasionally an aptness to take offence where none was intended, and then the whole house bore audible testimony to her displeasure: she used to scour through half-a-dozen doors in a minute for the mere purpose of banging them after her. She had rather more fears than were quite convenient of ghosts and witches, and thunder, and earwigs, and various other real and unreal sights and sounds, and thought nothing of rousing half the family in the middle of the night at the first symptom of a thunder-storm or an apparition. She had a terrible genius for music, and a tremendously powerful shrill high voice. Oh! her door-clapping was nothing to her singing! it rang through one's head like the screams of a peacock. Lastly, she was a sad flirt; she had about twenty lovers whilst she lived with us, probably more, but upwards of twenty she acknowledged. Her master, who watched with great amusement this uninterrupted and intricate succession of favourites, had the habit of calling her by the name of the reigning beau—Mrs. Charles, Mrs. John, Mrs. Robert; so that she has answered in her time to as many masculine appellations as would serve to supply a large family with a "commodity of good names." Once he departed from this custom, and called her "Jenny Dennison." On her inquiring the reason, we showed her "Old Mortality," and asked if she could not guess. "Dear me," said she, "why Jenny Dennison had only two!" Amongst Lucy's twenty

were three one-eyed lovers, like the three one-eyed calendars in the "Arabian Nights." They were much about the same period, nearly contemporaries, and one of them had nearly carried off the fair Helen. If he had had two eyes, his success would have been certain. She said yes and no, and yes again; he was a very nice young man—but that one eye—that unlucky one eye!—and the being rallied on her three calendars. There was no getting over that one eye: she said no, once more, and stood firm. And yet the pendulum might have continued to vibrate many times longer, had it not been fixed by the athletic charms of a gigantic London tailor, a superb man, really; black-haired, black-eyed, six feet high, and large in proportion. He came to improve the country fashions, and fixed his shop-board in a cottage so near us that his garden was only divided from our lawn by a plantation full of acacias and honey-suckles, where "the air smelt wooingly." It followed of course that he should make love to Lucy, and that Lucy should listen. All was speedily settled; as soon as he should be established in a good business, which, from his incomparable talent at cutting out, nobody could doubt, they were to be married. But they had not calculated on the perversity of country taste; he was too good a workman; his suits fitted over well; his employers missed certain accustomed awkwardnesses and redundancies which passed for beauties; besides, the stiffness and tightness which distinguished the new coat of the *ancien regime*, were wanting in the make of this daring innovator. The shears of our Bond-street cutter were as powerful as the wooden sword of Harlequin; he turned his clowns into gentlemen, and their brother clod-hoppers laughed at them, and they were ashamed. So the poor tailor lost his customers and his credit; and just as he had obtained Lucy's consent to the marriage, he walked off one fair morning, and was never heard of more. Lucy's absorbing feeling on this catastrophe was astonishment, pure unmixed astonishment! One would have thought that she considered fickleness as a female privilege, and had never heard of a man deserting a woman in her life. For three days she could only wonder; then came great indignation, and a little, a very little grief, which showed itself not so much in her words, which were chiefly such disclaimers as "I don't care! very lucky! happy escape!" and so on, as in her goings and doings, her aversion to the poor acacia grove, and even to the sight and smell of honeysuckles, her total loss of memory, and above all, in the distaste she showed to new conquests. She paid her faithless suitor the compliment of remaining loverless for three weary months; and when she relented a little, she admitted no fresh adorer, nothing but an old hanger-on; one not quite discarded during the tailor's reign; one who had dangled after her during the long courtship of the three calendars; one who was the handiest and most complaisant of wooers, always ready to fill up an interval, like a book, which can be laid aside when company comes in, and resumed a month afterwards at the very page and line where the reader left off. I think it was an affair of amusement and convenience on both sides. Lucy never intended to marry this commodious stopper of love gaps; and he, though he courted her for ten mortal years, never made a direct offer, till after the banns were published between her and her present husband: then, indeed, he said he was sorry—he had hoped—was it too late? and so forth. Ah! his sorrow was nothing to ours, and, when it came to the point, nothing to Lucy's. She cried every day for a fortnight, and had not her successor in office, the new housemaid, arrived, I do really believe that this lover would have shared the fate of the many successors to the unfortunate tailor.

I hope that her choice has been fortunate; it is certainly very different from what we all expected. The happy man had been a neighbour, (not on the side of the acacia-trees,) and on his removal to a greater distance the marriage took place. Poor dear Lucy! her spouse is the greatest possible contrast to herself; ten years younger at the very least; well-looking, but with no expression good or bad—I don't think he could smile, if he would—assuredly he never tries; well made, but as stiff as a poker; I dare say he never ran three yards in his life; perfectly steady, sober, honest, and industrious; but so young, so grave, so dull! one of your "demure boys," as Fallstaff calls them, "that never come to proof." You might guess a mile off that he was a schoolmaster, from the swelling pomposity of gait, the solemn decorum of manner, the affectation of age and wisdom, which contrast so oddly with his young unmeaning face. The moment he speaks, you are certain. Nobody but a village pedagogue ever did or ever could talk like Mr. Brown,—ever displayed such elaborate politeness, such a study of phrases, such choice words and long words, and fine words and hard words! He speaks by the book,—the spelling book, and is civil after the fashion of the Polite Letter-Writer. He is so entirely without tact, that he does not in the least understand the impression produced by his wife's delightful manners, and interrupts her perpetually to speechify and apologise, and explain and amend. He is fond of her, nevertheless, in his own cold, slow way, and proud of her, and grateful to her friends, and a very good kind of young man altogether; only that I cannot quite forgive him for taking Lucy away in the first place, and making her a school-mistress in the second. She a school-mistress, a keeper of silence, a maintainer of discipline, a scold-

er, a punisher! Ah! she would rather be scolded herself; it would be a far lighter punishment. Lucy likes her vocation as little as I do. She has not the natural love of children, which would reconcile her to the evils they cause; and she has a real passion for cleanliness, a fiery spirit of dispatch, which cannot endure the dust and litter created by the little troop on the one hand, or their tormenting slowness and stupidity on the other. She was the quickest and neatest of workwomen, piqued herself on completing a shirt or a gown sooner and better than seemed possible, and was scandalized at finding such talents degraded to the ignoble occupations of tacking a quarter of a yard of hemming for one, pinning half a seam for another, picking out the crooked stitching of a third, and working over the weak irregular burst-out buttonhole of a fourth. When she first went to S——, she was strongly tempted to do all the work herself. "The children would have liked it," said she, "and really I don't think the mothers would have objected; they care for nothing but marking. There are seven girls now in the school working samplers to be framed. Such a waste of silk, and time, and trouble! I said to Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Smith said to me"—Then she recounted the whole battle of the samplers, and her defeat; and then she sent for one which, in spite of her declaration that her girls never finished any thing, was quite completed (probably with a good deal of her assistance), and of which, notwithstanding her rational objection to its uselessness, Lucy was not a little proud. She held it up with great delight, pointed out all the beauties, selected her own favourite parts, especially a certain square rose-bud, and the landscape at the bottom; and finally pinned it against the wall, to show the effect it would have when framed. Really, that sampler was a superb thing in its way. First came a plain pink border; then a green border, zig-zag; then a crimson, wavy; then a brown, of a different and more complicated zig-zag; then the alphabet, great and small, in every colour of the rainbow, followed by a row of figures, flanked on one side by a flower, name unknown, tulip, poppy, lily,—something orange or scarlet, or orange-scarlet; on the other by the famous rose-bud; the divers sentences, religious and moral;—Lucy was quite provoked with me for not being able to read them: I dare say she thought in her heart that I was as stupid as any of her scholars; but never was MS. so illegible, not even my own, as the print work of that sampler—then, last and finest, the landscape, in all its glory. It occupied the whole narrow line at the bottom, and was composed with great regularity. In the centre was a house of a bright scarlet, with yellow windows, a green door, and a blue roof: on one side, a man with a dog; on the other, a woman with a cat—this is Lucy's information; I should never have guessed that there was any difference, except in colour, between the man and the woman, the dog and the cat; they were in form, height, and size, alike to a thread; the man grey, the woman pink, his attendant white, and her's black. Next to these figures, on either side, rose two fir-trees from two red flower-pots, nice little round bushes of a bright green intermixed with brown stitches, which Lucy explained, not to me.—"Don't you see the fir-cones, Sir? Don't you remember how fond she used to be of picking them up in her little basket at the dear old place? Poor thing, I thought of her all the time that I was working them! Don't you like the fir-cones?"——After this, I looked at the landscape almost as lovingly as Lucy herself.

With all her dislike to keeping school, the dear Lucy seems happy. In addition to the merciful spirit of conformity, which shapes the mind to the situation, whatever that may be, she has many sources of vanity and comfort—her house above all. It is a very respectable dwelling, finely placed on the edge of a large common, close to a high-road, with a pretty flower-court before it, shaded by four horse-chestnuts cut into arches, a sashed window on either side of the door, and on the door a brass knocker, which being securely nailed down, serves as a quiet peaceable handle for all goers, instead of the importunate and noisy use for which it was designed. Jutting out at one end of the court is a small stable; retiring back at the other, a large school-room; and behind, a yard for children, pigs, and poultry, a garden, and an arbour. The inside is full of comfort; miraculously clean and orderly for a village school, and with a little touch of very allowable finery in the gay window-curtains, the cupboard full of pretty china, the handsome chairs, the bright mahogany table, the shining tea-urn, and brilliant tea-tray, that decorate the parlour. What a pleasure it is to see Lucy presiding in that parlour, in all the glory of her honest affection and her warm hospitality, making tea for the three guests whom she loves best in the world, vaunting with courteous pride her home-made bread and her fresh butter, yet thinking nothing good enough for the occasion; smiling and glowing, and looking the very image of beautiful happiness.—Such a moment almost consoles us for losing her.

Lucy's pleasure is in her house; mine is in its situation. The common on which it stands is one of a series of heathy hills, or rather a high table-land, pierced in one part by a ravine of marshy ground, filled with alder bushes growing larger and larger as the valley widens, and at last mixing with the fine old oaks of the forest of P——. Nothing can be more delightful than to sit on the steep brow of the hill, amongst the fragrant heath-

flowers, the blue-bells, and the wild thyme, and look upon the sea of trees spreading out beneath us; the sluggish water just peeping from amid the alders, giving brightly back the bright blue sky; and, farther down, herds of rough ponies, and of small stunted cows, the wealth of the poor, coming up from the forest. I have sometimes seen two hundred of these cows together, each belonging to a different person, and distinguishing and obeying the call of its milker. All the boundaries of this heath are beautiful. On one side is the hanging coppice, where the lily of the valley grows so plentifully amongst broken ridges and fox-earths, and the roots of pollard-trees. On another are the immense fir plantations of Mr. B., whose balmy odour hangs heavily in the air, or comes sailing on the breeze like smoke across the landscape. Farther on, beyond the pretty parsonage-house, with its short avenue, its fish-ponds, and the magnificent poplars which form a landmark for many miles round, rise the rock-like walls of the old city of S——, one of the most perfect Roman remains now existing in England. The wall can be traced all round, rising sometimes to a height of twenty feet, over a deep narrow slip of meadow land, once the ditch, and still full of aquatic flowers. The ground within rises level with the top of the wall, which is of grey stone, crowned with the finest forest trees, whose roots seem interlaced with the old masonry, and covered with wreaths of ivy, brambles, and a hundred other trailing plants. Close by one of the openings, which mark the site of the gates, is a graduated terrace, called by antiquaries the Amphitheatre, which commands a rich and extensive view, and is backed by the village church and an old farm-house, — the sole buildings in that once populous city, whose streets are now traced only by the blighted and withered appearance of the ripening corn. Roman coins and urns are often ploughed up there, and it is a favourite haunt of the lovers of "hoar antiquity." But the beauty of the place is independent of its noble associations. The very heart expands in the deep verdure and perfect loneliness of that narrow winding valley, fenced on one side by steep coppices or its own tall irregular hedge, on the other by the venerable crag-like wall, whose proud coronet of trees, its jutting ivy, its huge twisted thorns, its briery festoons, and the deep caves where the rabbits burrow, make the old bulwark seem no work of man, but a majestic piece of nature. As a picture it is exquisite. Nothing can be finer than the mixture of those varied greens so crisp and life-like, with the crumbling grey stone; nothing more perfectly in harmony with the solemn beauty of the place, than the deep cooings of the wood-pigeons, who abound in the walls. I know no pleasure so intense, so soothing, so apt to bring sweet tears into the eyes, or to awaken thoughts that "lie too deep for tears," as a walk round the old city on a fine summer evening. A ride to S—— was always delightful to me, even before it became the residence of Lucy; it is now my prime festival.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE FIRST PRIMROSE.

March 6th. — Fine March weather: boisterous, blustering, much wind and squalls of rain; and yet the sky, where the clouds are swept away, deliciously blue, with snatches of sunshine, bright, and clear, and healthful, and the roads, in spite of the slight glittering showers, crisply dry. Altogether, the day is tempting, very tempting. It will not do for the dear common, that windmill of a walk; but the close sheltered lines at the bottom of the hill, which keep out just enough of the stormy air, and let in all the sun, will be delightful. Past our old house, and round by the winding lanes, and the work-house, and across the lea, and so into the turnpike-road again, — that is our route for to-day. Forth we set, May-flower and I, rejoicing in the sunshine, and still more in the wind, which gives such an intense feeling of existence, and co-operating with brisk motion sets our blood and our spirits in a glow. For mere physical pleasure there is nothing perhaps equal to the enjoyment of being drawn, in a light carriage, against such a wind as this, by a blood horse at his height of speed. Walking comes next to it; but walking is not quite so luxurious or so spiritual, not quite so much what one fancies of flying, or being carried above the clouds in a balloon.

Nevertheless, a walk is a good thing; especially under this southern hedgerow, where nature is just beginning to live again: the perriwinkles, with their starry blue flowers, and their shining myrtle-like leaves, garlanding the bushes; woodbines and elder trees, pushing out their small swelling buds; and grasses and mosses springing forth in every variety of brown and green. Here we are at the corner where four lanes meet, or rather where a passable road of stones and gravel crosses an impassable one of beautiful but treacherous turf, and where the small white farm-house, scarcely larger than a cottage, and the well-stocked rick-yard behind, tell of comfort and order, but leave all unguessed the great riches of the master. How he became so rich is almost a puzzle; for though the farm be his own, it is not large; and, though prudent and frugal on ordinary occasions, farmer Barnard is no miser. His horses, dogs, and pigs, are the best kept in the parish, — May herself, although her beauty be injured by her

fatness, half envies the plight of his bitch Fly; his wife's gowns and shawls cost as much again as any shawls or gowns in the village: his dinner parties (to be sure they are not frequent) display twice the ordinary quantity of good things—two couples of ducks, two dishes of green peas, two turkey poults, two gammons of bacon, two plum-puddings; moreover, he keeps a single-horse chaise, and has built and endowed a Methodist chapel. Yet is he the richest man in these parts. Every thing prospers with him. Money drifts about him like snow. He looks like a rich man. There is a sturdy squareness of face and figure; a good-humoured obstinacy; a civil importance. He never boasts of his wealth, or gives himself undue airs; but nobody can meet him at market or vestry without finding out immediately that he is the richest man there. They have no child to all this money; but there is an adopted nephew, a fine spirited lad, who may, perhaps, some day or other, play the part of a fountain to the reservoir.

Now turn up the wide road till we come to the open common, with its park-like trees, its beautiful stream, wandering and twisting along, and its rural bridge. Here we turn again, past that other white farm-house, half hidden by the magnificent elms which stand before it. Ah! riches dwell not there; but there is found the next best thing—an industrious and light-hearted poverty. Twenty years ago Rachel Hilton was the prettiest and merriest lass in the country. Her father, an old game-keeper, had retired to a village ale-house, where his good beer, his social humour, and his black-eyed daughter, brought much custom. She had lovers by the score; but Joseph White, the dashing and lively son of an opulent farmer, carried off the fair Rachel. They married and settled here, and here they live still, as merrily as ever, with fourteen children of all ages and sizes, from nineteen years to nineteen months, working harder than any people in the parish, and enjoying themselves more. I would match them for labour and laughter against any family in England. She is a blithe, jolly dame, whose beauty has amplified into comeliness: he is tall, and thin, and bony, with sinews like whipcord, a strong lively voice, a sharp, weather-beaten face, and eyes and lips that smile and brighten when he speaks into a most contagious hilarity. They are very poor, and I often wish them richer; but I don't know—perhaps it might put them out.

Quite close to farmer White's is a little ruinous cottage, white-washed once, and now in a sad state of betweenity, where dangling stockings and shirts swelled by the wind, drying in a neglected garden, give signal of a washerwoman. There dwells, at present in a state of single blessedness, Betty Adams, the wife of our sometimes gardener. I never saw any one who so much reminded me in person of that lady whom every body knows, Mistress Meg Merrilies;—as tall, as grizzled, as stately, as dark, as gipsy-looking, bonneted and gowned like her prototype, and almost as oracular. Here the resemblance ceases. Mrs. Adams is a perfectly honest, industrious, pains-taking person, who earns a good deal of money by washing and charing, and spends it in other luxuries than tidiness,—in green tea, and gin, and snuff. Her husband lives in a great family ten miles off. He is a capital gardener—or rather he would be so, if he were not too ambitious. He undertakes all things, and finishes none. But a smooth tongue, a knowing look, and a great capacity of labour, carry him through. Let him but like his ale and his master, and he will do work enough for four. Give him his own way, and his full quantum, and nothing comes amiss to him.

Ah, May is bounding forward! Her silly heart leaps at the sight of the old place—and so, in good truth, does mine. What a pretty place it was,—or rather, how pretty I thought it! I suppose I should have thought any place so where I had spent eighteen happy years. But it was really pretty. A large, heavy, white house, in the simplest style, surrounded by fine oaks and elms, and tall massy plantations shaded down into a beautiful lawn, by wild overgrown shrubs, bowery acacias, ragged sweet-briars, promontories of dogwood, and Portugal laurel, and bays overhung by laburnum and bird-cherry; a long piece of water letting light into the picture, and looking just like a natural stream, the banks as rude and wild as the shrubbery, interspersed with broom, and furze, and bramble, and pollard oaks covered with ivy and honeysuckle; the whole enclosed by an old mossy park paling, and terminating in a series of rich meadows, richly planted. This is an exact description of the home which, three years ago, it nearly broke my heart to leave. What a tearing up by the roots it was! I have pitied cabbage plants and celery, and all transplantable things, ever since; though, in common with them and with other vegetables, the first agony of the transportation being over, I have taken such firm and tenacious hold of my new soil, that I would not for the world be pulled up again, even to be restored to the old beloved ground; not even if its beauty were undiminished, which is by no means the case; for in those three years it has thrice changed masters, and every successive possessor has brought the curse of improvement upon the place: so that between filling up the water to cure dampness, cutting down trees to let in prospects, planting to keep them out, shutting up windows to darken the inside of the house, (by which means one end looks precisely as an eight of spades would do that should have the misfortune to lose one of his corner pips,) and building colonnades to lighten the out, added to a gen-

eral clearance of pollards, and brambles, and ivy, and honeysuckles, and park palings, and irregular shrubs, the poor place is so transmogrified, that if it had its old looking-glass, the water, back again, it would not know its own face. And yet I love to haunt round about it: so does May. Her particular attraction is a certain broken bank full of rabbit burrows, into which she insinuates her long pliant head and neck, and tears her pretty feet by vain scratchings: mine is a warm sunny hedgerow, in the same remote field, famous for early flowers. Never was a spot more variously flowery: primroses yellow, lilac white, violets of either hue, cowslips, oxlips, arums, orchises, wild hyacinths, ground ivy, pansies, strawberries, heart's-ease, formed a small part of the Flora of that wild hedgerow. How profusely they covered the sunny open slope under the weeping birch, "the lady of the woods,"—and how often have I started to see the early innocent brown snake, who loved the spot as well as I did, winding along the young blossoms, or rustling among the fallen leaves! There are primrose leaves already, and short green buds, but no flowers; not even in that furze cradle so full of roots, where they used to blow as in a basket. No, my May, no rabbits! no primroses! We may as well get over the gate into the woody winding lane, which will bring us home again.

Here we are, making the best of our way between the old elms that arch so solemnly over head, dark and sheltered even now. They say that a spirit haunts this deep pool — a white lady without a head. I cannot say that I have seen her, often as I have paced this lane at deep midnight, to hear the nightingales, and look at the glow-worms;—but there, better and rarer than a thousand ghosts, dearer even than nightingales and glow-worms, there is a primrose, the first of the year; a tuft of primroses, springing in yonder sheltered nook, from the mossy roots of an old willow, and living again in the clear bright pool. Oh, how beautiful they are — three fully blown, and two bursting buds! how glad I am I came this way! They are not to be reached. Even Jack Rapley's love of the difficult and the unattainable would fail him here: May herself could not stand on that steep bank. So much the better. Who would wish to disturb them? There they live in their innocent and their fragrant beauty, sheltered from the storms, and rejoicing in the sunshine, and looking as if they could feel their happiness. Who would disturb them? Oh, how glad I am I came this way home!

BRAMLEY MAYING.

Mr. Geoffrey Crayon has, in his delightful but somewhat fanciful writings, brought into general view many old sports and customs, some of which, indeed, still linger about the remote counties, familiar as local peculiarities to their inhabitants, whilst the greater part lie buried in books of the Elizabethan age, known only to the curious in English literature. One rural custom which would have enchanted him, and which prevails in the north of Hampshire, he has not noticed, and probably does not know. Did any of my readers ever hear of a Maying? Let not any notions of chimney-sweeps soil the imagination of the gay Londoner! A country Maying is altogether a different affair from the street exhibitions which mix so much pity with our mirth, and do the heart good, perhaps, but not by gladdening it. A country Maying is a meeting of the lads and lasses of two or three parishes, who assemble in certain erections of green boughs, called May-houses, to dance and—but I am going to tell all about it in due order, and must not forestall my description.

Last year we went to Bramley Maying. There had been two or three such merry-makings before in that inaccessible neighbourhood, where the distance of large towns, the absence of great houses, and the consequent want of all decent roads, together with a country of peculiar wildness and beauty, combine to produce a sort of modern Arcadia. We had intended to assist at a Maying in the forest of Pamber, thinking that the deep glades of that fine woodland scenery would be more congenial to the spirit of old English merriment, as it breathed more of Robin Hood and Maid Marian than a mere village green—to say nothing of its being of the two more accessible by four-footed and two-wheeled conveyances. But the Pamber day had been suffered to pass, and Brambley was the last Maying of the season. So to Bramley we went.

As we had a considerable distance to go, we set out about noon, intending to return to dinner at six. Never was a day more congenial to a happy purpose! It was a day made for country weddings and dances on the green —a day of dazzling light, of ardent sunshine falling on hedge-rows and meadows fresh with spring showers. You might almost see the grass grow and the leaves expand under the influence of that vivifying warmth; and we passed through the well-known and beautiful scenery of W. Park, and the pretty village of M., with a feeling of new admiration, as if we had never before felt their charms; so gloriously did the trees in their young leaves, the grass springing beneath them, the patches of golden broom and deeper furze, the cottages covered with roses, the blooming orchards, and the light snowy sprays of the cherry-trees tossing their fair blossoms across the deep-blue sky, pour upon the eye the full magic of colour. On we passed gaily and happily as far as we knew our way—perhaps

a little farther, for the place of our destination was new to both of us, when we had the luck, good or bad, to meet with a director in the person of the butcher of M. My companion is known to most people within a circuit of ten miles; so we had ready attention and most civil guidance from the man of beef and mutton—a prodigious person, almost as big as a prize ox, as rosy and jovial-looking as Falstaff himself,—who was standing in the road with a slender shrewd-looking boy, apt and ready enough to have passed for the page. He soon gave us the proper, customary, and unintelligible directions as to lanes and turnings—first to the right, then to the left, then round farmer Jennings' close, then across the Holy Brook, then to the right again—till at last, seeing us completely bewildered, he offered to send the boy, who was going our way for half a mile to carry out a shoulder of veal, to attend us to that distance as a guide; an offer gratefully accepted by all parties, especially the lad, whom we relieved of his burthen and took up behind, where he swang in an odd but apparently satisfactory posture, between running and riding. While he continued with us, we fell into no mistakes; but at last he and the shoulder of veal reached their place of destination; and after listening to a repetition, or perhaps a variation, of the turns right and left which were to conduct us to Bramley-green, we and our little guide parted.

On we went, twisting and turning through a labyrinth of lanes, getting deeper and deeper every moment, till at last, after many doubtings, we became fairly convinced that we had lost our way. Not a soul was in the fields; not a passenger in the road; not a cottage by the road-side: so on we went—I am afraid to say how far, (for when people have lost their way, they are not the most accurate measurers of distance) — till we came suddenly on a small farm-house, and saw at once that the road we had trodden led to that farm, and thither only. The solitary farm-house had one solitary inmate, a smiling middle-aged woman, who came to us and offered her services with the most alert civility: — "All her boys and girls were gone to the Maying," she said, "and she remained to keep house."— "The Maying! We are near Bramley, then?" —"Only two miles the nearest way across the fields — were we going? — she would see to the horse — we would soon be there, only over that style and then across that field, and then turn to the right, and then take the next turning—no! the next but one to the left."— Right and left again for two miles over those deserted fields! — Right and left! we shuddered at the words. "Is there no carriage-road; — where are we?" — "At Silchester, close to the walls, only half a mile from the church." — "At Silchester!" and in ten minutes we had said a thankful farewell to our kind informant, had retraced our steps a little, had turned up another lane, and found ourselves at the foot of that commanding spot which antiquaries call the Amphitheatre, close under the walls of the Roman city, and in full view of an old acquaintance, the schoolmaster of Silchester, who happened to be there in his full glory, playing the part of Cicerone to a party of ladies, and explaining far more than he knows, or than any one knows, of streets, and gates, and sites of temples, which, by the by, the worthy pedagogue usually calls parish churches. I never was so glad to see him in my life,—never thought he could have spoken with so much sense and eloquence as were comprised in the two words, "straight forward," by which he answered our inquiry as to the road to Bramley.

And forward we went by a way beautiful beyond description: a road bounded on one side by every variety of meadow, and corn-field, and rich woodland; on the other, by the rock-like walls of the old city, crowning an abrupt magnificent bank of turf, broken by fragments, crags as it were, detached from the ruin, and young trees, principally ash, with silver stems standing out in picturesque relief from the green slope, and itself crowned with every sort of vegetation, from the rich festoons of briar and ivy, which garlanded its side, to the venerable oaks and beeches which nodded on its summit. I never saw any thing so fine in my life. To be sure, we nearly broke our necks. Even I, who, having been overset astonishingly often, without any harm happening, have acquired, from frequency of escape, the confidence of escaping, and the habit of not caring for that particular danger, which is, I suppose, what in a man, and in battle, would be called courage, — even I was glad enough to get out, and do all I could towards wriggling the gig round the rock-like stones, or sometimes helping to lift the wheel over the smaller impediments. We escaped that danger, and left the venerable walls behind us.—But I am losing my way here, too; I must loiter on the road no longer. Our other delays, of a broken bridge—a bog—another wrong turning — and a meeting with a loaded wagon, in a lane too narrow to pass — all this must remain untold.

At last we reached a large farm-house at Bramley; another mile remained to the Green, but that was impassable. Nobody thinks of riding at Bramley. The late lady of the manor, when at rare and uncertain intervals she resided for a few weeks at her house of B. R., used, in visiting her only neighbour, to drive her coach and four through her farmer's ploughed fields. We must walk: but the appearance of gay crowds of rustics, all passing along one path, gave assurance that this time we should not lose our way. Oh, what a pretty path it was! along one sunny sloping field, up and down, dotted with trees like a

park; then across a deep shady lane, with cows loitering and cropping grass from the banks; then up a long narrow meadow, in the very pride and vigour of its greenness, richly bordered by hedgerow timber, and terminating in the church-yard, and a little country church.

Bramley church is well worth seeing. It contains that rare thing, a monument fine in itself, and finer in its situation. We had heard of it, and in spite of the many delays we had experienced, could not resist the temptation of sending one of the loiterers, who seemed to stand in the church-yard as a sort of out-guard to the Maying, to the vicar's house for the key. Prepared as we had been to see something unusual, we were very much struck. The church is small, simple, decaying, almost ruinous; but, as you turn from the entrance into the centre aisle, and advance up to the altar, your eye falls on a lofty recess, branching out like a chapel on one side, and seen through a Gothic arch. It is almost paved with monumental brasses of the proud family of B., who have possessed the surrounding property from the time of the Conqueror; and in the centre of the large open space stands a large monument, surrounded by steps, on which reclines a figure of a dying man, with a beautiful woman leaning over him, full of a lovely look of anxiety and tenderness. The figures are very fine; but that which makes the grace and glory of this remarkable piece of sculpture, is its being backed by an immense Gothic window, nearly the whole size of the recess, entirely composed of old stained glass. I do not know the story which the artist, in the series of pictures, intended to represent; but there they are, the gorgeous, glorious colours — red, and purples, and greens, glowing like an anemone bed in the sunshine, or like one of the windows made of amethysts and rubies in the Arabian Tales, and throwing out the monumental figures with an effect almost magical. The parish clerk was at the Maying, and we had only an unlettered rustic to conduct us, so that I do not even know the name of the sculptor — he must have a strange mingled feeling if ever he saw his work in its present home — delight that it looks so well, and regret that there is no one to look at it. That monument alone was worth losing our way for.

But cross two fields more, and up a quiet lane, and we are at the Maying, announced afar off by the merry sound of music, and the merrier clatter of childish voices. Here we are at the green; a little turfy spot, where three roads meet, close shut in by hedgerows, with a pretty white cottage, and its long slip of a garden at one angle. I had no expectation of scenery so compact, so like a glade in a forest; it is quite a cabinet picture, with green trees for the frame. In the midst grows a superb horse-chesnut, in the full glory of its flowery pyramids, and from the trunk of the chestnut the Mayhouses commence. They are covered alleys built of green boughs, decorated with garlands and great bunches of flowers, the gayest that blow—lilacs, Guelder-roses, pionies, tulips, stocks — hanging down like chandeliers among the dancers; for of dancers, gay dark-eyed young girls in straw bonnets and white gowns, and their lovers in their Sunday attire, the May-houses were full. The girls had mostly the look of extreme youth, and danced well and quietly like ladies—too much so; I should have been glad to see less elegance and more enjoyment: and their partners, though not altogether so graceful, were as decorous and as indifferent as real gentlemen. It was quite like a ball-room, as pretty and almost as dull. Outside was the fun. It is the outside, the upper gallery of the world, that has that good thing. There were children laughing, eating, trying to cheat, and being cheated, round an ancient and practised vender of oranges and gingerbread; and on the other side of the tree lay a merry group of old men, in coats almost as old as themselves, and young ones in no coats at all, excluded from the dance by the disgrace of a smock-frock. Who would have thought of etiquette finding its way into the Mayhouses! That group would have suited Teniers; it smoked and drank a little, but it laughed a great deal more. There were a few decent matronly looking women, too, sitting in a cluster; and young mothers strolling about with infants in their arms; and ragged boys peeping through the boughs at the dancers; and the bright sun shining gloriously on all this innocent happiness. Oh what a pretty sight it was!—worth losing our way for—worth losing our dinner — both which happened; whilst a party of friends, who were to have joined us, were far more unlucky; for they not only lost their way and their dinner, but rambled all day about the country, and never reached Bramley Maying.

COUSIN MARY.

About four years ago, passing a few days with the highly educated daughters of some friends in this neighbourhood, I found domesticated in the family a young lady, whom I shall call as they called her, Cousin Mary. She was about eighteen, not beautiful perhaps, but lovely certainly to the fullest extent of that loveliest word—as fresh as a rose; as fair as a lily; with lips like winter berries; dimpled, smiling lips; and eyes of which nobody could tell the colour, they danced so incessantly in their own gay light. Her figure was tall, round, and slender; exquisitely well proportioned it must have been, for in all attitudes, (and in her innocent gaiety, she was scarcely ever two minutes in the same) she

was grace itself. She was, in short, the very picture of youth, health, and happiness. No one could see her without being prepossessed in her favour. I took a fancy to her the moment she entered the room; and it increased every hour in spite of, or rather perhaps for, certain deficiencies, which caused poor Cousin Mary to be held exceedingly cheap by her accomplished relatives.

She was the youngest daughter of an officer of rank, dead long ago; and his sickly widow having lost by death, or that other death, marriage, all her children but this, could not, from very fondness, resolve to part with her darling for the purpose of acquiring the commonest instruction. She talked of it, indeed, now and then, but she only talked; so that, in this age of universal education, Mary C. at eighteen exhibited the extraordinary phenomenon of a young woman of high family, whose acquirements were limited to reading, writing, needle-work, and the first rules of arithmetic. The effect of this let-alone system, combined with a careful seclusion from all improper society, and a perfect liberty in her country rambles, acting upon a mind of great power and activity, was the very reverse of what might have been predicted. It had produced not merely a delightful freshness and originality of manner and character, a piquant ignorance of those things of which one is tired to death, but knowledge, positive, accurate, and various knowledge. She was, to be sure, wholly unaccomplished; knew nothing of quadrilles, though her every motion was dancing: nor a note of music, though she used to warble, like a bird, sweet snatches of old songs, as she skipped up and down the house; nor of painting, except as her taste had been formed by a minute acquaintance with nature into an intense feeling of art. She had that real extra sense, an eye for colour, too, as well as an ear for music. Not one in twenty—not one in a hundred of our sketching and copying ladies could love and appreciate a picture where there was colour and mind, a picture by Claude, or by our English Claudes, Wilson and Hoffland, as she could—for she loved landscape best, because she understood it best—it was a portrait of which she knew the original. Then her needle was in her hands almost a pencil. I never knew such an embroideress—she would sit "printing her thoughts on lawn," till the delicate creation vied with the snowy tracery, the fantastic carving of hoar frost, the richness of Gothic architecture, or of that which so much resembles it, the luxuriant fancy of old point lace. That was her only accomplishment, and a rare artist she was—muslin and net were her canvass. She had no French either, not a word; no Italian; but then her English was racy, unhackneyed, proper to the thought to a degree that only original thinking could give. She had not much reading, except of the Bible and Shakspeare, and Richardson's novels, in which she was learned; but then her powers of observation were sharpened and quickened, in a very unusual degree, by the leisure and opportunity afforded for their developement, at a time of life when they are most acute. She had nothing to distract her mind. Her attention was always awake and alive. She was an excellent and curious naturalist, merely because she had gone into the fields with her eyes open; and knew all the details of rural management, domestic or agricultural, as well as the peculiar habits and modes of thinking of the peasantry, simply because she had lived in the country, and made use of her ears. Then she was fanciful, recollective, new; drew her images from the real objects, not from their shadows in books. In short, to listen to her, and the young ladies her companions, who, accomplished to the height, had trodden the education-mill till they all moved in one step, had lost sense in sound, and ideas in words, was enough to make us turn masters and governesses out of doors, and leave our daughters and grand-daughters to Mrs. C.'s system of non-instruction. I should have liked to meet with another specimen, just to ascertain whether the peculiar charm and advantage arose from the quick and active mind of this fair Ignorant, or was really the natural and inevitable result of the training; but, alas! to find more than one unaccomplished young lady, in this accomplished age, is not to be hoped for. So I admired and envied; and her fair kinswoman pitied and scorned, and tried to teach; and Mary, never made for a learner, and as full of animal spirits as a school-boy in the holidays, sang, and laughed, and skipped about from morning till night.

It must be confessed, as a counter-balance to her other perfections, that the dear Cousin Mary was, as far as great natural modesty and an occasional touch of shyness would let her, the least in the world of a romp! She loved to toss about children, to jump over stiles, to scramble through hedges, to climb trees; and some of her knowledge of plants and birds may certainly have arisen from her delight in these boyish amusements. And which of us has not found that the strongest, the healthiest, and most flourishing acquirement has arisen from pleasure or accident, has been in a manner self-sown, like an oak of the forest? Oh she was a sad romp; as skittish as a wild colt, as uncertain as a butterfly, as uncatchable as a swallow! But her great personal beauty, the charm, grace, and lightness of her movements, and above all, her evident innocence of heart, were bribes of indulgence which no one could withstand. I never heard her blamed by any human being. The perfect unrestraint of her attitudes, and the exquisite symmetry of her form, would have rendered her an invaluable study for a painter. Her daily doings would have formed

a series of pictures. I have seen her scudding through a shallow rivulet, with her petticoats caught up just a little above the ankle, like a young Diana; and a bounding, skimming, enjoying motion, as if native to the element, which might have become a Naiad. I have seen her on the topmost round of a ladder, with one foot on the roof of a house, flinging down the grapes that no one else had nerve enough to reach, laughing, and garlanded, and crowned with vine leaves, like a Bacchante. But the prettiest combination of circumstances under which I ever saw her, was driving a donkey cart up a hill one sunny windy day, in September. It was a gay party of young women, some walking, some in open carriages of different descriptions, bent to see a celebrated prospect from a hill called the Ridges. The ascent was by a steep narrow lane, cut deeply between sand-banks, crowned with high feathery hedges. The road and its picturesque banks lay bathed in the golden sunshine, whilst the autumnal sky, intensely blue, appeared at the top as through an arch. The hill was so steep that we had all dismounted, and left our different vehicles in charge of the servants below; but Mary, to whom, as incomparably the best charioteer, the conduct of a certain nondescript machine, a sort of donkey curricle, had fallen, determined to drive a delicate little girl, who was afraid of the walk, to the top of the eminence. She jumped out for the purpose, and we followed, watching and admiring her as she won her way up the hill: now tugging at the donkeys in front with her bright face towards them and us, and springing along backwards —now pushing the chaise from behind—now running by the side of her steeds, patting and caressing them—now soothing the half frightened child—now laughing, nodding, and shaking her little whip at us—darting about like some winged creature—till at last she stopped at the top of the ascent, and stood for a moment on the summit, her straw bonnet blown back, and held on only by the strings; her brown hair playing on the wind in long natural ringlets; her complexion becoming every moment more splendid from exertion, redder and whiter; her eyes and her smile brightening and dimpling; her figure in its simple white gown, strongly relieved by the deep blue sky, and her whole form seeming to dilate before our eyes. There she stood under the arch formed by two meeting elms, a Hebe, a Psyche, a perfect goddess of youth and joy. The Ridges are very fine things altogether, especially the part to which we were bound, a turfy, breezy spot, sinking down abruptly like a rock into a wild foreground of heath and forest, with a magnificent command of distant objects;—but we saw nothing that day like the figure on the top of the hill.

After this I lost sight of her for a long time. —She was called suddenly home by the dangerous illness of her mother, who, after languishing for some months, died; and Mary went to live with a sister much older than herself, and richly married in a manufacturing town, where she languished in smoke, confinement, dependence, and display, (for her sister was a match-making lady, a manœuvrer) for about a twelvemonth. She then left her house and went into Wales—as a governess! Imagine the astonishment caused by this intelligence amongst us all; for I myself, though admiring the untaught damsel almost as much as I loved her, should certainly never have dreamed of her as a teacher. However, she remained in the rich baronet's family where she had commenced her employment. They liked her apparently,—there she was; and again nothing was heard of her for many months, until, happening to call on the friends at whose house I had originally met her, I espied her fair blooming face, a rose amongst roses, at the drawing-room window,—and instantly with the speed of light was met and embraced by her at the hall-door.

There was not the slightest perceptible difference in her deportment. She still bounded like a fawn, and laughed and clapped her hands like an infant. She was not a day older, or graver, or wiser, since we parted. Her post of tutoress had at least done *her* no harm, whatever might have been the case with her pupils. The more I looked at her, the more I wondered; and after our mutual expressions of pleasure had a little subsided, I could not resist the temptation of saying,—"So you are really a governess!"—"Yes."—"And you continue in the same family?"—"Yes."—"And you like your post?"—"O yes, yes!"—"But my dear Mary, what could induce you to go?"—"Why, they wanted a governess, so I went."—"But what could induce them to keep you?" The perfect gravity and earnestness with which this question was put, set her laughing, and the laugh was echoed back from a group at the end of the room, which I had not before noticed—an elegant man in the prime of life showing a portfolio of rare prints to a fine girl of twelve, and a rosy boy of seven, evidently his children. "Why did they keep me? Ask them," replied Mary, turning towards them with an arch smile. "We kept her to teach her ourselves," said the young lady.—"We kept her to play cricket with us," said her brother. "We kept her to marry," said the gentleman, advancing gaily to shake hands with me. "She was a bad governess, perhaps; but she is an excellent wife—that is her true vocation." And so it is. She is, indeed, an excellent wife; and assuredly a most fortunate one. I never saw happiness so sparkling or so glowing; never saw such devotion to a bride, or such fondness for a step-mother, as Sir W. S. and his lovely children show to the sweet Cousin Mary.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

VIOLETING.

March 27th. — It is a dull grey morning, with a dewy feeling in the air; fresh, but not windy; cool, but not cold;—the very day for a person newly arrived from the heat, the glare, the noise, and the fever of London, to plunge into the remotest labyrinths of the country, and regain the repose of mind, the calmness of heart, which has been lost in that great Babel. I must go violeting—it is a necessity—and I must go alone: the sound of a voice, even my Lizzy's, the touch of Mayflower's head, even the bounding of her elastic foot, would disturb the serenity of feeling which I am trying to recover. I shall go quite alone, with my little basket twisted like a bee-hive, which I love so well, because *she* gave it to me, and kept sacred to violets and to those whom I love; and I shall get out of the high road the moment I can. I would not meet any one just now, even of those whom I best like to meet.

Ha!—Is not that group—a gentleman on a blood horse, a lady keeping pace with him so gracefully and easily — see how prettily her veil waves in the wind, created by her own rapid motion!—and that gay, gallant boy, on the gallant white Arabian, curveting at their side, but ready to spring before them every instant—is not that chivalrous-looking party, Mr. and Mrs. M. and dear B.? No! the servant is in a different livery. It is some of the ducal family, and one of their young Etonians. I may go on. I shall meet no one now; for I have fairly left the road, and am crossing the lea by one of those wandering paths amidst the gorse and the heath and the low broom, which the sheep and lambs have made—a path turfy, elastic, thymy, and sweet even at this season.

We have the good fortune to live in an unenclosed parish, and may thank the wise obstinacy of two or three sturdy farmers, and the lucky unpopularity of a ranting madcap lord of the manor, for preserving the delicious green patches, the islets of wilderness amidst cultivation, which form perhaps the peculiar beauty of English scenery. The common that I am passing now—the lea, as it is called—is one of the loveliest of these favoured spots. It is a little sheltered scene, retiring, as it were, from the village; sunk amidst higher lands, hills would be almost too grand a word: edged on one side by one gay high-road, and intersected by another; and surrounded by a most picturesque confusion of meadows, cottages, farms, and orchards; with a great pond in one corner, unusually bright and clear, giving a delightful cheerfulness and daylight to the picture. The swallows haunt that pond; so do the children. There is a merry group round it now; I have seldom seen it without one. Children love water, clear, bright, sparkling water; it excites and feeds their curiosity; it is motion and life.

The path that I am treading leads to a less lively spot, to that large heavy building on one side of the common, whose solid wings, jutting out far beyond the main body, occupy three sides of a square, and give a cold shadowy look to the court. On one side is a gloomy garden, with an old man digging in it, laid out in straight dark beds of vegetables, potatoes, cabbages, onions, beans; all earthy and mouldy as a newly dug grave. Not a flower or a flowering shrub: not a rose-tree, or a currant-bush! Nothing but for sober melancholy use. Oh how different from the long irregular slips of the cottage-gardens, with their gay bunches of polyanthuses and crocuses, their wall-flowers, sending sweet odours through the narrow casement, and their gooseberry-trees, bursting into a brilliancy of leaf, whose vivid greenness has the effect of a blossom on the eye! Oh how different! On the other side of this gloomy abode is a meadow of that intense emerald hue, which denotes the presence of stagnant water, surrounded by willows at regular distances, and like the garden, separated from the common by a wide, moat-like ditch. That is the parish work-house. All about it is solid, substantial, useful;—but so dreary! so cold! so dark! There are children in the court, and yet all is silent. I always hurry past that place as if it were a prison. Restraint, sickness, age, extreme poverty, misery, which I have no power to remove or alleviate,—these are the ideas, the feelings, which the sight of those walls excites; yet, perhaps, if not certainly, they contain less of that extreme desolation than the morbid fancy is apt to paint. There will be found order, cleanliness, food, clothing, warmth, refuge for the homeless, medicine and attendance for the sick, rest and sufficiency for old age, and sympathy, the true and active sympathy which the poor show to the poor, for the unhappy. There may be worse places than a parish work-house—and yet I hurry past it. The feeling, the prejudice will not be controlled.

The end of the dreary garden edges off into a close-sheltered lane, wandering and winding, like a rivulet, in gentle "sinuosities," (to use a word once applied by Mr. Wilberforce to the Thames at Henley) amidst green meadows, all alive with cattle, sheep, and beautiful lambs, in the very spring and pride of their tottering prettiness: or fields of arable land, more lively still with troops of stooping bean-setters, women and children, in all varieties of costume and colour; and ploughs and harrows, with their whistling boys and steady carters, going through, with a slow and plodding industry, the main business of this busy season. What work bean-setting is? What a reverse of the position assigned to man to distinguish him

from the beasts of the field! Only think of stooping for six, eight, ten hours a day drilling holes in the earth with a little stick, and then dropping in the beans one by one. They are paid according to the quantity they plant; and some of the poor women used to be accused of clumping them—that is to say, of dropping more than one bean into a hole. It seems to me, considering the temptation, that not to clump is to be at the very pinnacle of human virtue.

Another turn in the lane, and we come to the house standing amongst the high elms—the old farm-house, which always, I don't know why, carries back my imagination to Shakspeare's days. It is a long, low, irregular building, with one room at an angle from the house, covered with ivy, fine white-veined ivy; the first floor of the main building projecting and supported by oaken beams, and one of the windows below, with its old casement and long narrow panes, forming the half of a shallow hexagon. A porch with seats in it, surmounted by a pinnacle, pointed roofs, and clustered chimneys, complete the picture. Alas! it is little else but a picture! The very walls are crumbling to decay under a careless landlord and a ruined tenant.

Now a few yards farther, and I reach the bank. Ah! I smell them already—their exquisite perfume steams and lingers in this moist heavy air.—Through this little gate, and along the green south bank of this green wheat field, and they burst upon me, the lovely violets, in tenfold loveliness!—The ground is covered with them, white and purple, enamelling the short dewy grass, looking but the more vividly coloured under the dull, leaden sky. There they lie by hundreds, by thousands. In former years I have been used to watch them from the tiny green bud, till one or two stole into bloom. They never came on me before in such a sudden and luxuriant glory of simple beauty,—and I do really owe one pure and genuine pleasure to feverish London! How beautiful they are placed too, on this sloping bank, with the palm branches waving over them, full of early bees, and mixing their honeyed scent with the more delicate violet odour! How transparent and smooth and lusty are the branches, full of sap and life! And there, just by the old mossy root, is a superb tuft of primroses, with a yellow butterfly hovering over them, like a flower floating on the air. What happiness to sit on this turfy knoll, and fill my basket with the blossoms! What a renewal of heart and mind! To inhabit such a scene of peace and sweetness is again to be fearless, gay and gentle as a child. Then it is that thought becomes poetry, and feeling religion.—Then it is that we are happy and good. Oh that my whole life could pass so, floating on blissful and innocent sensation, enjoying in peace and gratitude the common blessings of Nature, thankful above all for the simple habits, the healthful temperament, which render them so dear! Alas! who may dare expect a life of such happiness?—But I can at least snatch and prolong the fleeting pleasure, can fill my basket with pure flowers, and my heart with pure thoughts; can gladden my little home with their sweetness; can divide my treasures with one, a dear one, who cannot seek them; can see them when I shut my eyes; and dream of them when I fall asleep.

THE TALKING LADY.

Ben Jonson has a play called The Silent Woman, who turns out, as might be expected, to be no woman at all—nothing, as Master Slender said, but "a great lubberly boy;" thereby, as I apprehend, discourteously presuming that a silent woman is a non-entity. If the learned dramatist, thus happily prepared and pre-disposed, had happened to fall in with such a specimen of female loquacity as I have just parted with, he might perhaps have given us a pendant to his picture in the Talking Lady. Pity but he had! He would have done her justice, which I could not at any time, least of all now: I am too much stunned; too much like one escaped from a belfry on a coronation day. I am just resting from the fatigue of four days' hard listening; four snowy, sleety, rainy days—days of every variety of falling weather, all of them too bad to admit the possibility that any petticoated thing, were she as hardy as a Scotch fir, should stir out,—four days chained by "sad civility" to that fire-side, once so quiet, and again—cheering thought! again I trust to be so, when the echo of that visiter's incessant tongue shall have died away.

The visiter in question is a very excellent and respectable elderly lady, upright in mind and body, with a figure that does honour to her dancing-master, a face exceedingly well preserved, wrinkled and freckled, but still fair, and an air of gentility over her whole person, which is not the least affected by her out-of-fashion garb. She could never be taken for any thing but a woman of family, and perhaps she could as little pass for any other than an old maid. She took us in her way from London to the west of England: and being, as she wrote, "not quite well, not equal to much company, prayed that no other guest might be admitted, so that she might have the pleasure of our conversation all to herself,"—(*Ours!* as if it were possible for any of us to slide in a word edgewise!)—"and especially enjoy the gratification of talking over old times with the master of the house, her countryman." Such was the promise of her letter, and to the letter it has been kept. All the news and

scandal of a large county forty years ago, and a hundred years before, and ever since, all the marriages, deaths, births, elopements, lawsuits, and casualties of her own times, her father's, grandfather's, great-grandfather's, nephew's, and grand-nephew's, has she detailed with a minuteness, an accuracy, a prodigality of learning, a profuseness of proper names, a pedantry of locality, which would excite the envy of a county historian, a king-at-arms, or even a Scotch novelist. Her knowledge is astonishing; but the most astonishing part of all is how she came by that knowledge. It should seem, to listen to her, as if, at some time of her life, she must have listened herself; and yet her countryman declares, that in the forty years he has known her, no such event has occurred; and she knows new news too! It must be intuition.

The manner of her speech has little remarkable. It is rather old-fashioned and provincial, but perfectly lady-like, low and gentle, and not seeming so fast as it is; like the great pedestrians she clears her ground easily, and never seems to use any exertion; yet, "I would my horse had the speed of her tongue, and so good a continuer." She will talk you sixteen hours a day for twenty days together, and not deduct one poor five minutes for halts and baiting time. Talking, sheer talking, is meat and drink and sleep to her. She likes nothing else. Eating is a sad interruption. For the tea-table she has some toleration; but dinner, with its clatter of plates and jingle of knives and forks, dinner is her abhorrence. Nor are the other common pursuits of life more in her favour. Walking exhausts the breath that might be better employed. Dancing is a noisy diversion, and singing is worse; she cannot endure any music, except the long, grand, dull concerto, which nobody thinks of listening to. Reading and chess she classes together as silent barbarisms, unworthy of a social and civilized people. Cards, too, have their faults; there is a rivalry, a mute eloquence in those four aces, that leads away the attention; besides, partners will sometimes scold; so she never plays at cards; and upon the strength of this abstinence had very nearly passed for *serious*, till it was discovered that she could not abide a long sermon. She always looks out for the shortest preacher, and never went to above one Bible meeting in her life. "Such speeches!" quoth she, "I thought the men never meant to have done. People have great need of patience." Plays, of course, she abhors; and operas, and mobs, and all things that will be heard, especially children; though for babies, particularly when asleep, for dogs and pictures, and such silent intelligences as serve to talk of and talk to, she has a considerable partiality; and an agreeable and gracious flattery to the mammas and other owners of these pretty dumb things is a very usual introduction to her miscellaneous harangues. The matter of these orations is inconceivably various. Perhaps the local and genealogical anecdotes, the sort of supplement to the history of *****shire, may be her strongest point; but she shines almost as much in medicine and housewifery. Her medical dissertations savour a little of that particular branch of the science called quackery. She has a specific against almost every disease to which the human frame is liable; and is terribly prosy and unmerciful in her symptoms. Her cures kill. In house-keeping, her notions resemble those of other verbal managers; full of economy and retrenchment, with a leaning towards reform, though she loves so well to declaim on the abuses in the cook's department, that I am not sure that she would very heartily thank any radical who should sweep them quite away. For the rest, her system sounds very finely in theory, but rather fails in practice. Her recipes would be capital, only that some way or other they do not eat well; her preserves seldom keep; and her sweet wines are sure to turn sour. These are certainly her favourite topics; but any one will do. Allude to some anecdote of the neighbourhood, and she forthwith treats you with as many parallel passages as are to be found in an air with variations. Take up a new publication, and she is equally at home there; for though she knows little of books, she has, in the course of an up-and-down life, met with a good many authors, and teazes and provokes you by telling of them precisely what you do not care to hear, the maiden names of their wives, and the Christian names of their daughters, and into what families their sisters and cousins married, and in what towns they have lived, what streets, and what numbers. Boswell himself never drew up the table of Dr. Johnson's Fleet-street courts with greater care, than she made out to me the successive residences of P. P., Esq., author of a tract on the French Revolution, and a pamphlet on the Poor Laws. The very weather is not a safe subject. Her memory is a perpetual register of hard frosts, and long droughts, and high winds, and terrible storms, with all the evils that followed in their train, and all the personal events connected with them, so that if you happen to remark that clouds are come up, and you fear it may rain, she replies, "Ay, it is just such a morning as three and thirty years ago, when my poor cousin was married — you remember my cousin Barbara — she married so and so, the son of so and so;" and then comes the whole pedigree of the bridegroom; the amount of the settlements, and the reading and signing them over night; a description of the wedding-dresses, in the style of Sir Charles Grandison, and how much the bride's gown cost per yard; the names, residences, and a short subsequent history of the bridemaids and men, the gentleman who gave the bride away, and the

clergyman who performed the ceremony, with a learned antiquarian digression relative to the church; then the setting out in procession; the marriage; the kissing; the crying; the breakfasting; the drawing the cake through the ring; and finally, the bridal excursion, which brings us back again at an hour's end to the starting-post, the weather, and the whole story of the sopping, the drying, the clothes-spoiling, the cold-catching, and all the small evils of a summer shower. By this time it rains, and she sits down to a pathetic see-saw of conjectures on the chance of Mrs. Smith's having set out for her daily walk, or the possibility that Dr. Brown may have ventured to visit his patients in his gig, and the certainty that Lady Green's new housemaid would come from London on the outside of the coach.

With all this intolerable prosing, she is actually reckoned a pleasant woman! Her acquaintance in the great manufacturing town where she usually resides is very large, which may partly account for the misnomer. Her conversation is of a sort to bear dividing. Besides, there is, in all large societies, an instinctive sympathy which directs each individual to the companion most congenial to his humour. Doubtless, her associates deserve the old French compliment, "*Ils ont tous un grand talent pour le silence.*" Parcelled out amongst some seventy or eighty, there may even be some savour in her talk. It is the *tete-à-tete* that kills, or the small fire-side circle of three or four, where only one can speak, and all the rest must seem to listen—*seem!* did I say?—must listen in good earnest. Hotspur's expedient in a similar situation of crying "Hem! Go to," and marking not a word, will not do here; compared to her, Owen Glendower was no conjurer. She has the eye of a hawk, and detects a wandering glance, an incipient yawn, the slightest movement of impatience. The very needle must be quiet. If a pair of scissors do but wag, she is affronted, draws herself up, breaks off in the middle of a story, of a sentence, of a word, and the unlucky culprit must, for civility's sake, summon a more than Spartan fortitude, and beg the torturer to resume her torments—"That, that is the unkindest cut of all!" I wonder, if she had happened to have married, how many husbands she would have talked to death. It is certain that none of her relations are longlived after she comes to reside with them. Father, mother, uncle, sister, brother, two nephews, and one niece, all these have successively passed away, though a healthy race, and with no visible disorder—except—but we must not be uncharitable. They might have died, though she had been born dumb:—"It is an accident that happens every day." Since the disease of her last nephew, she attempted to form an establishment with a widow lady, for the sake, as they both said, of the comfort of society. But—strange miscalculation! she was a talker too! They parted in a week.

And we have also parted. I am just returning from escorting her to the coach, which is to convey her two hundred miles westward; and I have still the murmur of her *adieux* resounding in my ears, like the indistinct hum of the air on a frosty night. It was curious to see how, almost simultaneously, these mournful *adieux* shaded into cheerful salutations of her new comrades, the passengers in the mail. Poor souls! Little does the civil young lad who made way for her, or the fat lady, his mamma, who with pains and inconvenience made room for her, or the grumpy gentleman in the opposite corner, who after some dispute, was at length won to admit her dressing box,—little do they suspect what is to befall them. Two hundred miles! and she never sleeps in a carriage! Well, patience be with them, and comfort and peace! A pleasant journey to them! And to her all happiness! She is a most kind and excellent person, one for whom I would do any thing in my poor power—ay, even were it to listen to her another four days.

ELLEN.

A very small gift may sometimes cause great pleasure. I have just received a present which has delighted me more than any thing ever bestowed on me by friends or fortune. It is—but my readers shall guess what it is; and, that they may be enabled to do so, I must tell them a story.

Charlotte and Ellen Page were the twin daughters of the rector of N., a small town in Dorsetshire. They were his only children, having lost their mother shortly after their birth; and, as their father was highly connected, and still more highly accomplished, and possessed good church preferment with a considerable private fortune, they were reared and educated in the most liberal and expensive style. Whilst mere infants they had been uncommonly beautiful, and as remarkably alike as occasionally happens with twin sisters, distinguished only by some ornament of dress. Their very nurse, as she used to boast, could hardly tell her pretty "couplets" apart, so exactly alike were the soft blue eyes, the rosy cheeks, the cherry lips, and the curly light hair. Change the turquoise necklace for the coral, and nurse herself would not know Charlotte from Ellen. This pretty puzzle, this inconvenience, of which mammas and aunts and grandmammas love to complain, did not last long. Either from a concealed fall, or from original delicacy of habit, the little Ellen faded and drooped almost into deformity. There was no visible defect in her shape, ex-

cept a slight and almost imperceptible lameness when in quick motion; but there was the marked and peculiar look in the features, the languor and debility, and above all, the distressing consciousness attendant upon imperfect formation; and, at the age of twenty years, the contrast between the sisters was even more striking than the likeness had been at two.

Charlotte was a fine, robust, noble-looking girl, rather above the middle height; her eyes and complexion sparkled and glowed with life and health, her rosy lips seemed made for smiles, and her glossy brown hair played in natural ringlets round her dimpled face. Her manner was a happy mixture of the playful and the gentle; frank, innocent, and fearless, she relied with a sweet confidence on every body's kindness, was ready to be pleased, and secure of pleasing. Her artlessness and *naïveté* had great success in society, especially as they were united with the most perfect good-breeding, and considerable quickness and talent. Her musical powers were of the most delightful kind; she sang exquisitely, joining, to great taste and science, a life, and freedom, and buoyancy, quite unusual in that artificial personage, a young lady. Her clear and ringing notes had the effect of a milk-maid's song, as if a mere ebullition of animal spirits; there was no resisting the contagion of Charlotte's glee. She was a general favourite, and above all a favourite at home, — the apple of her father's eye, the pride and ornament of his house, and the delight and comfort of his life. The two children had been so much alike, and born so nearly together, that the precedence in age had never been definitely settled; but that point seemed very early to decide itself. Unintentionally, as it were, Charlotte took the lead, gave invitations, received visiters, sate at the head of the table, became in fact and in name Miss Page, while her sister continued Miss Ellen.

Poor Ellen! she was short, and thin, and sickly, and pale, with no personal charm but the tender expression of her blue eyes and the timid sweetness of her countenance. The resemblance to her sister had vanished altogether, except when very rarely some strong emotion of pleasure, a word of praise, or a look of kindness from her father, would bring a smile and a blush at once into her face, and lighten it up like a sunbeam. Then, for a passing moment, she was like Charlotte, and even prettier,—there was so much of mind, of soul, in the transitory beauty. In manner she was unchangeably gentle and distressingly shy, shy even to awkwardness. Shame and fear clung to her like her shadow. In company she could neither sing, nor play, nor speak, without trembling, especially when her father was present. Her awe of him was inexpressible. Mr. Page was a man of considerable talent and acquirement, of polished and elegant manners, and great conversational power, — quick, ready, and sarcastic. He never condescended to scold; but there was something very formidable in the keen glance, and the cutting jest, to which poor Ellen's want of presence of mind frequently exposed her,—something from which she shrank into the very earth. He was a good man too, and a kind father—at least he meant to be so,—attentive to her health and comfort, strictly impartial in favours and presents, in pocket-money and amusements, making no difference between the twins, except that which he could not help, the difference in his love. But, to an apprehensive temper and an affectionate heart, that was every thing; and whilst Charlotte flourished and blossomed like a rose in the sunshine, Ellen sickened and withered like the same plant in the shade.

Mr. Page lost much enjoyment by this unfortunate partiality; for he had taste enough to have particularly valued the high endowments which formed the delight of the few friends to whom his daughter was intimately known. To them not only her varied and accurate acquirements, but her singular richness of mind, her grace and propriety of expression and fertility of idea, joined to the most perfect ignorance of her own superiority, rendered her an object of as much admiration as interest. In poetry, especially, her justness of taste and quickness of feeling were almost unrivalled. She was no poetess herself, never, I believe, even ventured to compose a sonnet; and her enjoyment of high literature was certainly the keener for that wise abstinence from a vain competition. Her admiration was really worth having. The tears would come into her eyes, the book would fall from her hand, and she would sit lost in ecstasy over some noble passage, till praise, worthy of the theme, would burst in unconscious eloquence from her lips.

But the real charm of Ellen Page lay in the softness of her heart and the generosity of her character: no human being was ever so free from selfishness, in all its varied and clinging forms. She literally forgot herself in her pure and ardent sympathy with all whom she loved, or all to whom she could be useful. There were no limits to her indulgence, no bounds to her candour. Shy and timid as she was, she forgot her fears to plead for the innocent, or the penitent, or even the guilty. She was the excuser-general of the neighbourhood, turned every speech and action the sunny side without, and often in her good-natured acuteness hit on the real principle of action, when the cunning and the worldly-wise and the cynical, and such as look only for bad motives, had failed. She had, too, that rare quality, a genuine sympathy not only with the sorrowful, (there is a pride in that feeling, a superiority, — we have all plenty of that,) but with the happy. She could smile with those who smiled, as well as weep with those

who wept, and rejoice in a success to which she had not contributed, protected from every touch of envy, no less by her noble spirit than by her pure humility: she never thought of herself.

So constituted, it may be imagined that she was, to all who really knew her, an object of intense admiration and love. Servants, children, poor people, all adored Miss Ellen. She had other friends in her own rank of life, who had found her out—many; but her chief friend, her principal admirer, she who loved her with the most entire affection, and looked up to her with the most devoted respect, was her sister. Never was the strong and lovely tie of twin-sisterhood more closely knit than in these two charming young women. Ellen looked on her favoured sister with a pure and unjealous delight that made its own happiness, a spirit of candour and of justice that never permitted her to cast a shade of blame on the sweet object of her father's partiality: she never indeed blamed him; it seemed to her so natural that every one should prefer her sister. Charlotte, on the other hand, used all her influence for Ellen, protected and defended her, and was half tempted to murmur at an affection which she would have valued more if shared equally with that dear friend. Thus they lived in peace and harmony; Charlotte's bolder temper and higher spirits leading and guiding in all common points, whilst on the more important she implicitly yielded to Ellen's judgment. But, when they had reached their twenty-first year, a great evil threatened one of the sisters, arising (strange to say) from the other's happiness. Charlotte, the reigning *belle* of an extensive and affluent neighbourhood, had had almost as many suitors as Penelope; but, light-hearted, happy at home, constantly busy and gay, she had taken no thought of love, and always struck me as a very likely subject for an old maid; yet her time came at last. A young man, the very reverse of herself, pale, thoughtful, gentleman-like, and melancholy, wooed and won our fair Euphrosyne. He was the second son of a noble house, and bred to the church; and it was agreed between the fathers, that, as soon as he should be ordained, (for he still wanted some months of the necessary age,) and settled in a family living held for him by a friend, the young couple should be married.

In the mean while Mr. Page, who had recently succeeded to some property in Ireland, found it necessary to go thither for a short time; and, unwilling to take his daughters with him, as his estate lay in the disturbed districts, he indulged us with their company during his absence. They came to us in the bursting spring-time, on the very same day with the nightingale; the country was new to them, and they were delighted with the scenery and with our cottage life. We, on our part, were enchanted with our young guests. Charlotte was certainly the most amiable of enamoured damsels, for love with her was but a more sparkling and smiling form of happiness;—all that there was of care and fear in this attachment fell to Ellen's lot; but even she, though sighing at the thought of parting, could not be very miserable whilst her sister was so happy.

A few days after their arrival, we happened to dine with our accomplished neighbours, Colonel Falkner and his sister. Our young friends of course accompanied us; and a similarity of age, of liveliness, and of musical talent, speedily recommended Charlotte and Miss Falkner to each other. They became immediately intimate, and were soon almost inseparable. Ellen at first hung back. "The house was too gay, too full of shifting company, of titles, and of strange faces. Miss Falkner was very kind; but she took too much notice of her, introduced her to lords and ladies, talked of her drawings, and pressed her to sing:—she would rather, if I pleased, stay with me, and walk in the coppice, or sit in the arbour, and one might read Spenser, while the other worked—that would be best of all. Might she stay?"—"Oh surely! But Colonel Falkner, Ellen, I thought you would have liked him?"—"Yes!"—"That *yes* sounds exceedingly like *no*."—"Why, is he not almost too clever, too elegant, too grand a man? Too mannered, as it were! Too much like what one fancies of a prince—of George the Fourth, for instance—too high and too condescending? These are strange faults," continued she, laughing—"and it is a curious injustice that I should dislike a man merely because he is so graceful, that he makes me feel doubly awkward—so tall, that I am in his presence a conscious dwarf—so alive and eloquent in conversation, that I feel more than ever puzzled and unready. But so it is. To say the truth, I am more afraid of him than of any human being in the world, except one. I may stay with you—may I not; and read of Una and of Britomart—that prettiest scene where her old nurse soothes her to sleep? I may stay?" And for two or three mornings she did stay with me; but Charlotte's influence and Miss Falkner's kindness speedily drew her to Holly-grove, at first shyly and reluctantly, yet soon with an evident though quiet enjoyment; and we, sure that our young visiters could gain nothing but good in such society, were pleased that they should so vary the humble home-scene.

Colonel Falkner was a man in the very prime of life, of that happy age which unites the grace and spirit of youth with the firmness and vigour of manhood. The heir of a large fortune, he had served in the peninsular war, fought in Spain and France, and at Waterloo, and, quitting the army at the peace, had loitered about Germany and Italy and Greece, and only returned on the death of his father,

two or three years back, to reside on the family estate, where he had won "golden opinions from all sorts of people." He was, as Ellen truly described him, tall and graceful, and well-bred almost to a fault; reminding her of that *beau-ideal* of courtly elegance, George the Fourth, and me, (pray, reader, do not tell!) me, a little, a very little, the least in the world, of Sir Charles Grandison. He certainly did excel rather too much in the mere forms of politeness, in cloakings and bowings, and handings down stairs; but then he was, like both his prototypes, thoroughly imbued with its finer essence — considerate, attentive, kind, in the most comprehensive sense of that comprehensive word. I have certainly known men of deeper learning and more original genius, but never any one whose powers were better adapted to conversation, who could blend more happily the most varied and extensive knowledge with the most playful wit and the most interesting and amiable character. *Fascinating* was the word that seemed made for him. His conversation was entirely free from trickery and display — the charm was (or seemed to be) perfectly natural: he was an excellent listener; and when he was speaking to any eminent person — orator, artist, or poet, — I have sometimes seen a slight hesitation, a momentary diffidence, as attractive as it was unexpected. It was this astonishing evidence of fellow-feeling, joined to the gentleness of his tone, the sweetness of his smile, and his studied avoidance of all particular notice or attention, that first reconciled Ellen to Colonel Falkner. His sister, too, a charming young woman, as like him as Viola to Sebastian, began to understand the sensitive properties of this shrinking and delicate flower, which, left to itself, repaid their kind neglect by unfolding in a manner that surprised and delighted us all. Before the spring had glided into summer, Ellen was as much at home at Holly-grove as with us; talked and laughed and played and sang as freely as Charlotte. She would indeed break off if visibly listened to, either when speaking or singing; but still the ice was broken; that rich, low, mellow voice, unrivalled in pathos and sweetness, might be heard every evening, even by the Colonel, with little more precaution, not to disturb her by praise or notice, than would be used with her fellow-warbler the nightingale.

She was happy at Holly-grove, and we were delighted; but so shifting and various are human feelings and wishes, that, as the summer wore on, before the hay-making was over in its beautiful park, whilst the bees were still in its lime-trees, and the golden beetle lurked in its white rose, I began to lament that she had ever seen Holly-grove, or known its master. It was clear to me, that unintentionally on his part, unwittingly on hers, her heart was gone, — and, considering the merit of the unconscious possessor, probably gone for ever. She had all the pretty marks of love at that happy moment when the name and nature of the passion are alike unsuspected by the victim. To her there was but one object in the whole world, and that one was Colonel Falkner: she lived only in his presence; hung on his words; was restless she knew not why in his absence; adopted his tastes and opinions, which differed from hers as those of clever men so frequently do from those of clever women; read the books he praised, and praised them too, deserting our old idols, Spenser and Fletcher, for his favourites, Dryden and Pope; sang the songs he loved as she walked about the house; drew his features instead of Milton's in a portrait which she was copying for me of our great poet,—and finally wrote his name on the margin. She moved as in a dream — a dream as innocent as it was delicious! — but oh, the sad, sad waking! It made my heart ache to think of the misery to which that fine and sensitive mind seemed to be reserved. Ellen was formed for constancy and suffering — it was her first love, and it would be her last. I had no hope that her affection was returned. Young men, talk as they may of mental attractions, are commonly the slaves of personal charms. Colonel Falkner, especially, was a professed admirer of beauty. I had even sometimes fancied that he was caught by Charlotte's, and had therefore taken an opportunity to communicate her engagement to his sister. Certainly he paid our fair and blooming guest extraordinary attention! any thing of gallantry or compliment was always addressed to her, and so for the most part was his gay and captivating conversation; whilst his manner to Ellen, though exquisitely soft and kind, seemed rather that of an affectionate brother. I had no hopes.

Affairs were in this posture when I was at once grieved and relieved by the unexpected recall of our young visiters. Their father had completed his business in Ireland, and was eager to return to his dear home, and his dear children; Charlotte's lover, too, was ordained, and was impatient to possess his promised treasure. The intended bridegroom was to arrive the same evening to escort the fair sisters, and the journey was to take place the next day. Imagine the revulsion of feeling produced by a short note, a bit of folded paper — the natural and redoubled ecstasy of Charlotte, the mingled emotions of Ellen. She wept bitterly: at first she called it joy — joy that she should again see her dear father; then it was grief to lose her Charlotte; grief to part from me; but, when she threw herself in a farewell embrace on the neck of Miss Falkner, whose brother happened to be absent for a few days on business, the truth appeared to burst upon her at once, in a gush of agony that seemed likely to break her heart. Miss

Falkner was deeply affected; begged her to write to her often, very often; loaded her with the gifts of little price, the valueless tokens which affection holds so dear, and stole one of her fair ringlets in return. "This is the curl which William used to admire," said she: "have you no message for poor William?"—Poor Ellen! her blushes spoke, and the tears that dropped from her downcast eyes; but she had no utterance. Charlotte, however, came to her relief with a profusion of thanks and compliments; and Ellen, weeping with a voice that would not be controlled, at last left Holly-grove.

The next day we too lost our dear young friends. Oh what a sad day it was! how much we missed Charlotte's bright smile and Ellen's sweet complacency! We walked about desolate and forlorn, with the painful sense of want and insufficiency, and of that vacancy in our home, and at our board, which the departure of a cherished guest is sure to occasion. To lament the absence of Charlotte, the dear Charlotte, the happiest of the happy, was pure selfishness; but of the aching heart of Ellen, my dear Ellen, I could not bear to think — and yet I could think of nothing else, could call up no other image than her pale and trembling form, weeping and sobbing as I had seen her at Holly-grove; she haunted even my dreams.

Early the ensuing morning I was called down to the colonel, and found him in the garden. He apologized for his unseasonable intrusion; talked of the weather, then of the loss which our society had sustained; blushed and hesitated; had again recourse to the weather; and at last by a mighty effort, after two or three sentences begun and unfinished, contrived, with an embarrassment more graceful and becoming than all his polished readiness, to ask me to furnish him with a letter to Mr. Page. "You must have seen," said he, colouring and smiling, "that I was captivated by your beautiful friend; and I hope—I could have wished to have spoken first to herself, to have made an interest — but still if her affections are disengaged—tell me, you who must know, you who are always my friend, have I any chance? Is she disengaged?" "Alas! I have sometimes feared this; but I thought you had heard — your sister at least was aware" — "Of what? It was but this very morning—aware of what?" "Of Charlotte's engagement." "Charlotte! It is of Ellen, not her sister, that I speak and think! Of Ellen, the pure, the delicate, the divine! That whitest and sweetest of flowers; the jasmine, the myrtle, the tuberose among women," continued he, elucidating his similes by gathering a sprig of each plant, as he paced quickly up and down the garden walk — "Ellen, the fairest and the best; your darling and mine! Will you give me a letter to her father? And will you wish me success?" "Will I! Oh! how sincerely! My dear colonel, I beg a thousand pardons for undervaluing your taste — for suspecting you of preferring a damask rose to a blossomed myrtle; I should have known you better." And then we talked of Ellen, dear Ellen,—talked and praised till even the lover's heart was satisfied. I am convinced that he went away that morning, persuaded that I was one of the cleverest women, and the best judges of character that ever lived.

And now my story is over. What need to say, that the letter was written with the warmest zeal, and received with the most cordial graciousness — or that Ellen, though shedding sweet tears, bore the shock of joy better than the shock of grief, — or that the twin sisters were married on the same day, at the same altar, each to the man of her heart, and each with every prospect of more than common felicity? What need to say this? Or having said this, why should I tell what was the gift that so enchanted me? I will not tell: — my readers shall decide according to their several fancies between silver favours or bridal gloves, or the magical wedding cake drawn nine times through the ring.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE COWSLIP-BALL.

May 16th. — There are moments in life, when, without any visible or immediate cause, the spirits sink and fall, as it were, under the mere pressure of existence: moments of unaccountable depression, when one is weary of one's very thoughts, haunted by images that will not depart—images many and various, but all painful; friends lost, or changed, or dead; hopes disappointed even in their accomplishment; fruitless regrets, powerless wishes, doubt and fear and self-distrust, and self-disapprobation. They who have known these feelings, (and who is there so happy as not to have known some of them?) will understand why Alfieri became powerless, and Froissart dull; and why even needle-work, that most effectual sedative, that grand soother and composer of woman's distrêss, fails to comfort me to-day. I will go out into the air this cool pleasant afternoon, and try what that will do. I fancy that exercise, or exertion of any kind, is the true specific for nervousness. "Fling but a stone, the giant dies." I will go to the meadows, the beautiful meadows! and I will have my materials of happiness, Lizzy and May, and a basket for flowers, and we will make a cowslip-ball. "Did you ever see a cowslip-ball, my Lizzy?"—"No."—"Come away, then! make haste! run, Lizzy!"

And on we go fast, fast! down the road,

across the lea, past the workhouse, along by the great pond, till we slide into the deep narrow lane, whose hedges seem to meet over the water, and win our way to the little farmhouse at the end. "Through the farm-yard, Lizzy; over the gate; never mind the cows; they are quiet enough."—"I don't mind 'em," said Miss Lizzy, boldly and truly, and with a proud affronted air, displeased at being thought to mind any thing, and showing by her attitude and manner some design of proving her courage by an attack on the largest of the herd, in the shape of a pull by the tail. "I don't mind 'em."—"I know you don't, Lizzy; but let them alone, and don't chase the turkey-cock. Come to me, my dear!" and, for a wonder, Lizzy came.

In the mean time my other pet, Mayflower, had also gotten into a scrape. She had driven about a huge unwieldy sow, till the animal's grunting had disturbed the repose of a still more enormous Newfoundland dog, the guardian of the yard. Out he sallied growling from the depth of his kennel, erecting his tail, and shaking his long chain. May's attention was instantly diverted from the sow to this new playmate, friend or foe, she cared not which: and he of the kennel, seeing his charge unhurt and out of danger, was at leisure to observe the charms of his fair enemy, as she frolicked round him, always beyond the reach of his chain, yet always with the natural instinctive coquetry of her sex, alluring him to the pursuit which she knew to be vain. I never saw a prettier flirtation. At last the noble animal, wearied out, retired to the inmost recesses of his habitation, and would not even approach her when she stood right before the entrance. "You are properly served, May. Come along, Lizzy. Across this wheat-field, and now over the gate. Stop! let me lift you down. No jumping, no breaking of necks, Lizzy!" And here we are in the meadows, and out of the world. Robinson Crusoe, in his lonely island, had scarcely a more complete, or a more beautiful solitude.

These meadows consist of a double row of small enclosures of rich grass-land, a mile or two in length, sloping down from high arable grounds on either side, to a little nameless brook that winds between them, with a course which in its infinite variety, clearness, and rapidity, seems to emulate the bold rivers of the north, of whom, far more than of our lazy southern streams, our rivulet presents a miniature likeness. Never was water more exquisitely tricksy:—now darting over the bright pebbles, sparkling and flashing in the light with a bubbling music, as sweet and wild as the song of the woodlark; now stretching quietly along, giving back the rich tufts of the golden marsh-marygolds which grow on its margin; now sweeping round a fine reach of green grass, rising steeply into a high mound, a mimic promontory, whilst the other side sinks softly away, like some tiny bay, and the water flows between, so clear, so wide, so shallow, that Lizzy, longing for adventure, is sure she could cross unwetted; now dashing through two sand-banks, a torrent deep and narrow, which May clears at a bound; now sleeping half-hidden beneath the alders and hawthorns and wild roses, with which the banks are so profusely and variously fringed, whilst flags,* lilies, and other aquatic plants, almost cover the surface of the stream. In good truth it is a beautiful brook, and one that Walton himself might have sitten by and loved, for trout are there; we see them as they dart up the stream, and hear and start at the sudden plunge when they spring to the surface for the summer flies. Izaac Walton would have loved our brook and our quiet meadows; they breathe the very spirit of his own peacefulness, a soothing quietude that sinks into the soul. There is no path through them, not one; we might wander a whole spring day, and not see a trace of human habitation. They belong to a number of small proprietors, who allow each other access through their respective grounds, from pure kindness and neighbourly feeling, a privilege never abused; and the fields on the other side of the water are reached by a rough plank, or a tree thrown across, or some such homely bridge. We ourselves possess one of the most beautiful; so that the strange pleasure of property, that instinct which makes Lizzy delight in her broken doll, and May in the bare bone which she has pilfered from the kennel of her recreant admirer of Newfoundland, is added to the other charms of this enchanting scenery; a strange pleasure it is, when one so poor as I can feel it! Perhaps it is felt most by the poor, with the rich it may be less intense—too much diffused and spread out, becoming thin by expansion, like leaf-gold; the little of the poor may be not only more precious, but more pleasant to them: certain that bit of grassy and blossomy earth, with its green knolls and tufted bushes, its old pollards wreathed with ivy, and its bright and babbling waters, is very dear to me. But

* Walking along these meadows one bright sunny afternoon, a year or two back, and rather later in the season, I had an opportunity of observing a curious circumstance in natural history. Standing close to the edge of the stream, I remarked a singular appearance on a large tuft of flags. It looked like bunches of flowers, the leaves of which seemed dark, yet transparent, intermingled with brilliant tubes of bright blue or shining green. On examining this phenomenon more closely, it turned out to be several clusters of dragon-flies, just emerged from their deformed crysalis state, and still torpid and motionless from the wetness of their filmy wings. Half an hour later we returned to the spot, and they were gone. We had seen them at the very moment when beauty was complete, and animation dormant. I have since found nearly a similar account of this curious process in Mr. Bingley's very entertaining work, called "Animal Biography."

I must always have loved these meadows, so fresh, and cool, and delicious to the eye and to the tread, full of cowslips, and of all vernal flowers: Shakspeare's Song of Spring bursts irrepressibly from our lips as we step on them:

"When daisies pied, and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then on every tree—"

"Cuckoo! cuckoo!" cried Lizzy, breaking in with her clear childish voice; and immediately, as if at her call, the real bird, from a neighbouring tree (for these meadows are dotted with timber like a park), began to echo my lovely little girl, "cuckoo! cuckoo!" I have a prejudice very unpastoral and unpoetical (but I cannot help it, I have many such), against this "harbinger of spring." His note is so monotonous, so melancholy; and then the boys mimic him; one hears "cuckoo! cuckoo!" in dirty streets, amongst smoky houses, and the bird is hated for faults not his own. But prejudices of taste, likings and dislikings, are not always vanquishable by reason; so, to escape the serenade from the tree, which promised to be of considerable duration, (when once that eternal song begins, on it goes ticking like a clock)—to escape that noise I determined to excite another, and challenged Lizzy to a cowslip-gathering; a trial of skill and speed, to see which should soonest fill her basket. My stratagem succeeded completely. What scrambling, what shouting, what glee from Lizzy! twenty cuckoos might have sung unheard whilst she was pulling her own flowers, and stealing mine, and laughing, screaming, and talking through all.

At last the baskets were filled, and Lizzy declared victor: and down we sate, on the brink of the stream, under a spreading hawthorn, just disclosing its own pearly buds, and surrounded with the rich and enamelled flowers of the wild hyacinth, blue and white, to make our cowslip-ball. Every one knows the process; to nip off the tuft of flowerets just below the top of the stalk, and hang each cluster nicely balanced across a riband, till you have a long string like a garland; then to press them closely together, and tie them tightly up. We went on very prosperously, *considering*, as people say of a young lady's drawing, or a Frenchman's English, or a woman's tragedy, or of the poor little dwarf who works without fingers, or the ingenious sailor who writes with his toes, or generally of any performance which is accomplished by means seemingly inadequate to its production. To be sure, we met with a few accidents. First, Lizzy spoiled nearly all her cowslips by snapping them off too short; so there was a fresh gathering; in the next place, May overset my full basket, and sent the blossoms floating, like so many fairy favours, down the brook; then when we were going on pretty steadily, just as we had made a superb wreath, and were thinking of tying it together, Lizzy, who held the riband, caught a glimpse of a gorgeous butterfly, all brown and red and purple, and skipping off to pursue the new object, let go her hold; so all our treasures were abroad again. At last, however, by dint of taking a branch of alder as a substitute for Lizzy, and hanging the basket in a pollard-ash, out of sight of May, the cowslip-ball was finished. What a concentration of fragrance and beauty it was! golden and sweet to satiety! rich to sight, and touch, and smell! Lizzy was enchanted, and ran off with her prize, hiding amongst the trees in the very coyness of ecstasy, as if any human eye, even mine, would be a restraint on her innocent raptures.

In the mean while I sate listening, not to my enemy the cuckoo, but to a whole concert of nightingales, scarcely interrupted by any meaner bird, answering and vying with each other in those short delicious strains which are to the ear as roses to the eye; those snatches of lovely sound which come across us as airs from heaven. Pleasant thoughts, delightful associations, awoke as I listened; and almost unconsciously I repeated to myself the beautiful story of the Lutist and the Nightingale, from Ford's Lover's Melancholy.—Here it is. Is there in English poetry any thing finer?

"Passing from Italy to Greece, the tales
Which poets of an elder time have feign'd
To glorify their Tempe, bred in me
Desire of visiting Paradise.
To Thessaly I came, and living private,
Without acquaintance of more sweet companions
Than the old inmates to my love, my thoughts,
I day by day frequented silent groves
And solitary walks. One morning early
This accident encountered me: I heard
The sweetest and most ravishing contention
That art and nature ever were at strife in.
A sound of music touch'd mine ears, or rather
Indeed entranced my soul; as I stole nearer,
Invited by the melody, I saw
This youth, this fair-faced youth, upon his lute
With strains of strange variety and harmony
Proclaiming, as it seem'd, so bold a challenge
To the clear choristers of the woods, the birds,
That as they flock'd about him, all stood silent,
Wondering at what they heard. I wonder'd too.
A nightingale,
Nature's best-skill'd musician, undertakes
The challenge; and for every several strain
The well-shaped youth could touch, she sang him down.
He could not run divisions with more art
Upon his quaking instrument than she,
The nightingale, did with her various notes
Reply to.
Some time thus spent, the young man grew at last
Into a pretty anger, that a bird,
Whom art had never taught clefs, moods, or notes,
Should vie with him for mastery, whose study
Had busied many hours to perfect practice.
To end the controversy, in a rapture
Upon his instrument he plays so swiftly,

So many voluntaries, and so quick,
That there was curiosity and cunning
Concord in discord, lines of differing method
Meeting in one full centre of delight.
The bird (ordain'd to be
Music's first martyr) strove to imitate
These several sounds: which when her warbling throat
Fail'd in, for grief down dropt she on his lute,
And brake her heart. It was the quaintest sadness
To see the conqueror upon her hearse
To weep a funeral elegy of tears.
He look'd upon the trophies of his art,
Then sigh'd, then wiped his eyes; then sigh'd and cried,
'Alas! poor creature, I will soon revenge
This cruelty upon the author of it.
Henceforth this lute, guilty of innocent blood,
Shall never more betray a harmless peace
To an untimely end:' and in that sorrow,
As he was pashing it against a tree,
I suddenly stept in."

When I had finished the recitation of this exquisite passage, the sky, which had been all the afternoon dull and heavy, began to look more and more threatening; darker clouds, like wreaths of black smoke, flew across the dead leaden tint; a cooler, damper air blew over the meadows, and a few large heavy drops plashed in the water. "We shall have a storm. Lizzy! May! where are ye? Quick, quick, my Lizzy! run, run! faster faster!"

And off we ran; Lizzy not at all displeased at the thoughts of a wetting, to which indeed she is almost as familiar as a duck; May, on the other hand, peering up at the weather, and shaking her pretty ears with manifest dismay. Of all animals, next to a cat, a greyhound dreads rain. She might have escaped it; her light feet would have borne her home long before the shower; but May is too faithful for that, too true a comrade, understands too well the laws of good fellowship; so she waited for us. She did, to be sure, gallop on before, and then stop and look back, and beckon, as it were, with some scorn in her black eyes at the slowness of our progress. We in the mean while got on as fast as we could, encouraging and reproaching each other.—"Faster, my Lizzy! Oh what a bad runner!"—"Faster, faster! Oh what a bad runner," echoed my saucebox. "You are so fat, Lizzy, you make no way!"—"Ah! who else is fat?" retorted the darling. Certainly her mother is right; I do spoil that child.

By this time we were thoroughly soaked, all three. It was a pelting shower, that drove through our thin summer clothing and poor May's short glossy coat in a moment. And then, when we were wet to the skin, the sun came out, actually the sun, as if to laugh at our plight; and then, more provoking still, when the sun was shining, and the shower over, came a maid and a boy to look after us, loaded with cloaks and umbrellas enough to fence us against a whole day's rain. Never mind! on we go, faster and faster; Lizzy obliged to be most ignobly carried, having had the misfortune to lose a shoe in the mud, which we left the boy to look after.

Here we are at home—dripping; but glowing and laughing, and bearing our calamity most manfully. May, a dog of excellent sense, went instantly to bed in the stable, and is at this moment over head and ears in straw; Lizzy is gone to bed too, coaxed into that wise measure by a promise of tea and toast, and of not going home till to-morrow, and the story of Little Red Riding-Hood; and I am enjoying the luxury of dry clothing by a good fire. Really getting wet through now and then is no bad thing, finery apart; for one should not like spoiling a new pelisse or a handsome plume; but when there is nothing in question but a white gown and a straw bonnet, as was the case to-day, it is rather pleasant than not. The little chill refreshes, and our enjoyment of the subsequent warmth and dryness is positive and absolute. Besides, the stimulus and exertion do good to the mind as well as body! How melancholy I was all the morning! how cheerful I am now! Nothing like a shower-bath—a real shower-bath, such as Lizzy and May and I have undergone, to cure low spirits. Try it, my dear readers, if ever ye be nervous—I will answer for its success.

A COUNTRY CRICKET-MATCH.

I DOUBT if there be any scene in the world more animating or delightful than a cricket-match:—I do not mean a set match at Lord's Ground for money, hard money, between a certain number of gentlemen and players, as they are called—people who make a trade of that noble sport, and degrade it into an affair of bettings, and hedgings, and cheatings, it may be, like boxing or horse-racing; nor do I mean a pretty fête in a gentleman's park, where one club of cricketing dandies encounter another such club, and where they show off in graceful costume to a gay marquée of admiring belles, who condescend so to purchase admiration, and while away a long summer morning in partaking cold collations, conversing occasionally, and seeming to understand the game;—the whole being conducted according to ball-room etiquette, so as to be exceedingly elegant and exceedingly dull. No! the cricket that I mean is a real solid old-fashioned match between neighbouring parishes, where each attacks the other for honour and a supper, glory and half-a-crown a man. If there be any gentlemen amongst them, it is well—if not, it is so much the better. Your gentleman cricketer is in general rather an anomalous character. Elderly gentlemen are obviously good for nothing; and young beaux are, for the most part, hampered and trammelled by dress and habit; the stiff cravat,

the pinched-in waist, the dandy-walk—oh they will never do for cricket! Now, our country lads, accustomed to the flail or the hammer (your blacksmiths are capital hitters,) have the free use of their arms; they know how to move their shoulders; and they can move their feet too—they can run; then they are so much better made, so much more athletic, and yet so much lissomer—to use a Hampshire phrase, which deserves at least to be good English. Here and there, indeed, one meets with an old Etonian, who retains his boyish love for that game which formed so considerable a branch of his education; some even preserve their boyish proficiency, but in general it wears away like the Greek, quite as certainly, and almost as fast; a few years of Oxford, or Cambridge, or the continent, are sufficient to annihilate both the power and the inclination. No! a village match is the thing,—where our highest officer —our conductor (to borrow a musical term) is but a little farmer's second son; where a day-labourer is our bowler, and a blacksmith our long-stop; where the spectators consist of the retired cricketers, the veterans of the green, the careful mothers, the girls, and all the boys of two parishes, together with a few amateurs, little above them in rank, and not at all in pretension; where laughing and shouting, and the very ecstasy of merriment and good humour, prevail: such a match, in short, as I attended yesterday, at the expense of getting twice wet through, and as I would attend tomorrow, at the certainty of having that ducking doubled.

For the last three weeks our village has been in a state of great excitement, occasioned by a challenge from our north-western neighbours, the men of B., to contend with us at cricket. Now we have not been much in the habit of playing matches. Three or four years ago, indeed, we encountered the men of S., our neighbours south-by-east, with a sort of doubtful success, beating them on our own ground, whilst they in the second match returned the compliment on theirs. This discouraged us. Then an unnatural coalition between a high-church curate and an evangelical gentleman-farmer drove our lads from the Sunday-evening practice, which, as it did not begin before both services were concluded, and as it tended to keep the young men from the ale-house, our magistrates had winked at, if not encouraged. The sport therefore had languished until the present season, when under another change of circumstances the spirit began to revive. Half a dozen fine active lads, of influence amongst their comrades, grew into men and yearned for cricket: an enterprising publican gave a set of ribands: his rival, mine host of the Rose, an out-doer by profession, gave two; and the clergyman and his lay-ally, both well-disposed and good-natured men, gratified by the submission to their authority, and finding, perhaps, that no great good resulted from the substitution of public houses for out-of door diversions, relaxed. In short the practice recommenced, and the hill was again alive with men and boys, and innocent merriment; but farther than the riband matches amongst ourselves nobody dreamed of going, till this challenge —we were modest, and doubted our own strength. The B. people, on the other hand, must have been braggers born, a whole parish of gasconaders. Never was such boasting! such crowing! such ostentatious display of practice! such mutual compliments from man to man—bowler to batter, batter to bowler! It was a wonder they did not challenge all England. It must be confessed that we were a little astounded; yet we firmly resolved not to decline the combat; and one of the most spirited of the new growth, William Grey by name, took up the glove in a style of manly courtesy, that would have done honour to a knight in the days of chivalry.—"We were not professed players," he said; "being little better than school-boys, and scarcely older: but, since they had done us the honour to challenge us, we would try our strength. It would be no discredit to be beaten by such a field."

Having accepted the wager of battle, our champion began forthwith to collect his forces. William Grey is himself one of the finest youths that one shall see,—tall, active, slender, and yet strong, with a piercing eye full of sagacity, and a smile full of good humour,—a farmer's son by station, and used to hard work as farmers' sons are now, liked by every body, and admitted to be an excellent cricketer. He immediately set forth to muster his men, remembering with great complacency that Samuel Long, a bowler *comme il y en a peu*, the very man who had knocked down nine wickets, had beaten us, bowled us out at the fatal return match some years ago at S., had luckily, in a remove of a quarter of a mile last Lady-day, crossed the boundaries of his old parish, and actually belonged to us. Here was a stroke of good fortune! Our captain applied to him instantly; and he agreed at a word. Indeed Samuel Long is a very civilized person. He is a middle-aged man who looks rather old amongst our young lads, and whose thickness and breadth give no token of remarkable activity; but he is very active, and so steady a player! so safe! We had half gained the match when we had secured him. He is a man of substance, too, in every way; owns one cow, two donkeys, six pigs, and geese and ducks beyond count; dresses like a farmer, and owes no man a shilling;—and all this from pure industry, sheer day-labour. Note that your good cricketer is commonly the most industrious man in the parish; the habits that make him such are precisely those which make him a good workman—steadiness, sobriety, and activity—Samuel Long might pass for the

beau ideal of the two characters. Happy were we to possess him! Then we had another piece of good luck. James Brown, a journeyman blacksmith and a native, who, being of a rambling disposition, had roamed from place to place for half a dozen years, had just returned to settle with his brother at another corner of our village, bringing with him a prodigious reputation in cricket and in gallantry—the gay Lothario of the neighbourhood. He is said to have made more conquests in love and in cricket than any blacksmith in the county. To him also went the indefatigable William Grey, and he also consented to play. No end to our good fortune! Another celebrated batter, called Joseph Hearne, had likewise recently married into the parish. He worked, it is true, at the A. mills, but slept at the house of his wife's father in our territories. He also was sought and found by our leader. But he was grand and shy; made an immense favour of the thing; courted courting and then hung back;—"Did not know that he could be spared; had partly resolved not to play again—at least not this season; thought it rash to accept the challenge; thought they might do without him——" "Truly I think so too," said our spirited champion; "we will not trouble you, Mr. Hearne."

Having thus secured two powerful auxiliaries, and rejected a third, we began to reckon and select the regular native forces. Thus ran our list:—William Grey, 1.—Samuel Long, 2.—James Brown, 3.—George and John Simmons, one capital, the other so, so,—an uncertain hitter, but a good fieldsman, 5.—Joel Brent, excellent, 6.—Ben Appleton—Here was a little pause—Ben's abilities at cricket were not completely ascertained; but then he was so good a fellow, so full of fun and waggery! no doing without Ben. So he figured in the list, 7.—George Harris—a short halt there too! Slowish—slow but sure. I think the proverb brought him in, 8.—Tom Coper—oh, beyond the world, Tom Coper! the red-headed gardening lad, whose left-handed strokes send *her* (a cricket-ball, like that other moving thing a ship, is always of the feminine gender,) send her spinning a mile, 9.—Harry Willis, another blacksmith, 10.

We had now ten of our eleven, but the choice of the last occasioned some demur. Three young Martins, rich farmers of the neighbourhood, successively presented themselves, and were all rejected by our independent and impartial general for want of merit—*cricketal* merit. "Not good enough," was his pithy answer. Then our worthy neighbour, the half-pay lieutenant, offered his services—he, too, though with some hesitation and modesty, was refused—"not quite young enough," was his sentence. John Strong, the exceeding long son of our dwarfish mason, was the next candidate,—a nice youth—every body likes John Strong,—and a willing, but so tall and so limp, bent in the middle—a thread-paper, six feet high! We were all afraid that, in spite of his name, his strength would never hold out. "Wait till next year, John," quoth William Grey, with all the dignified seniority of twenty speaking to eighteen. "Coper's a year younger," said John. "Coper's a foot shorter," replied William: so John retired; and the eleventh man remained unchosen, almost to the eleventh hour. The eve of the match arrived, and the post was still vacant, when a little boy of fifteen, David Willis, brother to Harry, admitted by accident to the last practice, saw eight of them out, and was voted in by acclamation.

That Sunday evening's practice (for Monday was the important day) was a period of great anxiety, and, to say the truth, of great pleasure. There is something strangely delightful in the innocent spirit of party. To be one of a numerous body, to be authorized to say *we*, to have a rightful interest in triumph or defeat, is gratifying at once to social feeling and to personal pride. There was not a ten-year old urchin, or a septuagenary woman in the parish, who did not feel an additional importance, a reflected consequence, in speaking of "our side." An election interests in the same way; but that feeling is less pure. Money is there, and hatred, and politics, and lies. Oh, to be a voter or a voter's wife, comes nothing near the genuine and hearty sympathy of belonging to a parish, breathing the same air, looking on the same trees, listening to the same nightingales! Talk of a patriotic elector!—Give me a parochial patriot, a man who loves his parish! Even we, the female partisans, may partake the common ardour. I am sure I did. I never, though tolerably eager and enthusiastic at all times, remember being in a more delicious state of excitation than on the eve of that battle. Our hopes waxed stronger and stronger. Those of our players, who were present, were excellent. William Grey got forty notches off his own bat; and that brilliant hitter Tom Coper gained eight from two successive balls. As the evening advanced, too, we had encouragement of another sort. A spy, who had been despatched to reconnoitre the enemy's quarters, returned from their practising ground, with a most consolatory report. "Really," said Charles Grover, our intelligencer—a fine old steady judge, one who had played well in his day—"they are no better than so many old women. Any five of ours would beat their eleven." This sent us to bed in high spirits. Morning dawned less favourably. The sky promised a series of deluging showers, and kept its word, as English skies are wont to do on such occasions; and a lamentable message arrived at the head-quarters from our trusty comrade Joel Brent. His master, a great farmer, had begun the hay-harvest that very morning, and Joel, being as eminent in one field as in another, could not be spared. Imagine Joel's plight! the most ardent of all our eleven! a

knight held back from the tourney! a soldier from the battle! The poor swain was inconsolable. At last, one who is always ready to do a good-natured action, great or little, set forth to back his petition; and, by dint of appealing to the public spirit of our worthy neighbour, and the state of the barometer, talking alternately of the parish honour and thunder showers, of lost matches and sopped hay, he carried his point, and returned triumphantly with the delighted Joel.

In the mean time we became sensible of another defalcation. On calling over our roll, Brown was missing; and the spy of the preceding night, Charles Grover,—the universal scout and messenger of the village, a man who will run half-a-dozen miles for a pint of beer, who does errands for the very love of the trade, who, if he had been a lord, would have been an ambassador—was instantly despatched to summon the truant. His report spread general consternation. Brown had set off at four o'clock in the morning to play in a cricket-match at M., a little town twelve miles off, which had been his last residence. Here was desertion! Here was treachery against that goodly state, our parish! To send James Brown to Coventry was the immediate resolution; but even that seemed too light a punishment for such delinquency. Then how we cried him down! At ten, on Sunday-night, (for the rascal had actually practised with us, and never said a word of his intended disloyalty,) he was our faithful mate, and the best player (take him for all in all) of the eleven. At ten in the morning he had run away, and we were well rid of him; he was no batter compared with William Grey or Tom Coper; not fit to wipe the shoes of Samuel Long, as a bowler; nothing of a scout to John Simmons; the boy David Willis was worth fifty of him—

> "I trust we have within our realm
> Five hundred good as he,"

was the universal sentiment. So we took tall John Strong, who, with an incurable hankering after the honour of being admitted, had kept constantly with the players, to take the chance of some such accident—we took John for our *pisaller*. I never saw any one prouder than the good-humoured lad was of this not very flattering piece of preferment.

John Strong was elected, and Brown sent to Coventry; and when I first heard of his delinquency, I thought the punishment only too mild for the crime. But I have since learned the secret history of the offence; (if we could know the secret histories of all offences, how much better the world would seem than it does now!) and really my wrath is much abated. It was a piece of gallantry, of devotion to the sex, or rather a chivalrous obedience to one chosen fair. I must tell my readers the story. Mary Allen, the prettiest girl of M., had it seems revenged upon our blacksmith the numberless inconsistencies of which he stood accused. He was in love over head and ears, but the nymph was cruel. She said no, and no, and no, and poor Brown three times rejected, at last resolved to leave the place, partly in despair, and partly in that hope which often mingles strangely with a lover's despair, the hope that when he was gone he should be missed. He came home to his brother's accordingly; but for five weeks he heard nothing from or of the inexorable Mary, and was glad to beguile his own "vexing thoughts," by endeavouring to create in his mind an artificial and factitious interest in our cricket-match—all unimportant as such a trifle must have seemed to a man in love. Poor James, however, is a social and warm-hearted person, not likely to resist a contagious sympathy. As the time for the play advanced, the interest which he had at first affected became genuine and sincere: and he was really, when he left the ground on Sunday night, almost as enthusiastically absorbed in the event of the next day as Joel Brent himself. He little foresaw the new and delightful interest which awaited him at home, where, on the moment of his arrival, his sister-in-law and confidante, presented him with a billet from the lady of his heart. It had, with the usual delay of letters sent by private hands, in that rank of life, loitered on the road in a degree inconceivable to those who are accustomed to the punctual speed of the post, and had taken ten days for its twelve-miles' journey. Have my readers any wish to see this *billet-doux?* I can show them (but in strict confidence) a literal copy. It was addressed,

> "For mistur jem browne
> "blaxmith by
> "S."

The inside ran thus:—"Mistur browne this is to Inform yew that oure parish playes bramley men next monday is a week, i think we shall lose without yew. from your humble servant to command

"Mary Allen."

Was there ever a prettier relenting? a summons more flattering, more delicate, more irresistible? The precious epistle was undated; but having ascertained who brought it, and found, by cross-examining the messenger, that the Monday in question was the very next day, we were not surprised to find that *Mistur browne* forgot his engagement to us, forgot all but Mary and Mary's letter, and set off at four o'clock the next morning to walk twelve miles, and play for her parish and in her sight. Really we must not send James Browne to Coventry—must we? Though if, as his sister-in-law tells our damsel Harriet he hopes to do, he should bring the fair Mary home as his bride, he will not greatly care how little we say to him. But he must not be sent to Coventry—True-love forbid!

At last we were all assembled, and marched down to H. common, the appointed ground, which, though in our dominions according to the map, was the constant practising place of our opponents, and *terra incognita* to us. We found our adversaries on the ground as we expected, for our various delays had hindered us from taking the field so early as we wished; and, as soon as we had settled all preliminaries, the match began.

But, alas! I have been so long settling my preliminaries that I have left myself no room for the detail of our victory, and must squeeze the account of our grand achievements into as little compass as Cowley, when he crammed the names of eleven of his mistresses into the narrow space of four eight-syllable lines. *They* began the warfare—these boastful men of B. And what think you, gentle reader, was the amount of their innings? These challengers—the famous eleven—how many did they get? Think! imagine! guess!—You cannot?—Well!—they got twenty-two, or rather they got twenty; for two of theirs were short notches, and would never have been allowed, only that, seeing what they were made of, we and our umpires were not particular. They should have had twenty more, if they had chosen to claim them. Oh, how well we fielded! and how well we bowled! our good play had quite as much to do with their miserable failure as their bad. Samuel Long is a slow bowler, George Simmons a fast one, and the change from Long's lobbing, to Simmons's fast balls posed them completely. Poor simpletons! they were always wrong, expecting the slow for the quick, and the quick for the slow. Well, we went in. And what were our innings? Guess again!—guess! A hundred and sixty-nine! in spite of soaking showers, and wretched ground, where the ball would not run a yard, we headed them by a hundred and forty-seven; and then they gave in, as well they might. William Grey pressed them much to try another innings. "There was so much chance," as he courteously observed, "in cricket, that advantageous as our position seemed, we might, very possibly, be overtaken. The B. men had better try." But they were beaten sulky, and would not move—to my great disappointment; I wanted to prolong the pleasure of success. What a glorious sensation it is to be for five hours together winning—winning—winning! always feeling what a whist-player feels when he takes up four honours, seven trumps! Who would think that a little bit of leather, and two pieces of wood, had such a delightful and delighting power?

The only drawback on my enjoyment, was the failure of the pretty boy, David Willis, who injudiciously put in first, and playing for the first time in a match among men and strangers, who talked to him, and stared at him, was seized with such a fit of shame-faced shyness, that he could scarcely hold his bat, and was bowled out, without a stroke, from actual nervousness. "He will come off that," Tom Coper says.—I am afraid he will. I wonder whether Tom had ever any modesty to lose. Our other modest lad, John Strong, did very well; his length told in fielding, and he got good fame. Joel Brent, the rescued mower, got into a scrape, and out of it again; his fortune for the day. He ran out his mate, Samuel Long; who, I do believe, but for the excess of Joel's eagerness, would have staid in till this time, by which exploit he got into sad disgrace; and then he himself got thirty-seven runs, which redeemed his reputation. William Grey made a hit which actually lost the cricket-ball. We think she lodged in a hedge, a quarter of a mile off, but nobody could find her. And George Simmons had nearly lost his shoe, which he tossed away in a passion, for having been caught out, owing to the ball glancing against it. These, together with a very complete somerset of Ben Appleton, our long-stop, who floundered about in the mud, making faces and attitudes as laughable as Grimaldi, none could tell whether by accident or design, were the chief incidents of the scene of action. Amongst the spectators nothing remarkable occurred, beyond the general calamity of two or three drenchings, except that a form, placed by the side of a hedge, under a very insufficient shelter, was knocked into the ditch, in a sudden rush of the cricketers to escape a pelting shower, by which means all parties shared the fate of Ben Appleton, some on land and some by water; and that, amidst the scramble, a saucy gipsey of a girl contrived to steal from the knee of the demure and well-appareled Samuel Long, a smart handkerchief, which his careful dame had tied around it, to preserve his new (what is the mincing feminine word?) his new inexpressibles; thus reversing the story of Desdemona, and causing the new Othello to call aloud for his handkerchief, to the great diversion of the company. And so we parted; the players retired to their supper, and we to our homes; all wet through, all good humoured, and all happy—except the losers.

To-day we are happy too. Hats, with ribands in them, go glancing up and down; and William Grey says, with a proud humility, "We do not challenge any parish; but, if we be challenged, we are ready."

TOM CORDERY.

There are certain things and persons that look as if they could never die: things of such vigour and hardiness, that they seem constituted for an interminable duration, a sort of immortality. An old pollard oak of my ac-

quaintance used to give me this impression. Never was tree so gnarled, so knotted, so full of crooked life. Garlanded with ivy and woodbine, almost bending under the weight of its own rich leaves and acorns, tough, vigorous, lusty, concentrating as it were the very spirit of vitality in its own curtailed proportions,—could that tree ever die? I have asked myself twenty times, as I stood looking on the deep water over which it hung, and in which it seemed to live again—would that strong dwarf ever fall? Alas! the question is answered. Walking by the spot to-day—this very day—there it lay prostrate; the ivy still clinging about it, the twigs swelling with sap, and putting forth already the early buds. There it lay a victim to the taste and skill of some admirer of British woods, who with the tact of Ugo Foscolo (that prince of amateurs) has discovered in the knots and gnarls of the exterior coat the leopard-like beauty which is concealed within the trunk. There it lies, a type of sylvan instability, fallen like an emperor. Another piece of strong nature in a human form used to convey to me exactly the same feeling—and he is gone too! Tom Cordery is dead. The bell is tolling for him at this very moment. Tom Cordery dead! the words seem almost a contradiction. One is tempted to send for the sexton and the undertaker, to undig the grave, to force open the coffin-lid—there must be some mistake. But, alas! it is too true; the typhus fever, that axe which levels the strong as the weak, has hewed him down at a blow. Poor Tom Cordery!

This human oak grew on the wild North-of-Hampshire country, of which I have before made honourable mention; a country of heath, and hill, and forest, partly reclaimed, enclosed, and planted by some of the greater proprietors, but for the most part uncultivated and uncivilized; a proper refuge for wild animals of every species. Of these the most notable was my friend Tom Cordery, who presented in his own person no unfit emblem of the district in which he lived—the gentlest of savages, the wildest of civilized men. He was by calling rat-catcher, hare-finder, and broom-maker; a triad of trades which he had substituted for the one grand profession of poaching, which he followed in his younger days with unrivalled talent and success, and would, undoubtedly, have pursued till his death, had not the bursting of an overloaded gun unluckily shot off his left hand. As it was, he still contrived to mingle a little of his old unlawful occupation with his honest callings; was a reference of high authority amongst the young aspirants, an adviser of undoubted honour and secresy—suspected, and more than suspected, as being one "who, though he played no more, o'erlooked the cards." Yet he kept to windward of the law, and indeed contrived to be on such terms of social and even friendly intercourse with the guardians of the game on M. Common, as may be said to prevail between reputed thieves and the myrmidons of justice in the neighbourhood of Bow-street. Indeed his especial crony, the head-keeper, used sometimes to hint, when Tom, elevated by ale, had provoked him by overcrowing, "that a stump was no bad shield, and that to shoot off a hand and a bit of an arm for a blind, would be nothing to so daring a chap as Tom Cordery." This conjecture, never broached till the keeper was warm with wrath and liquor, and Tom fairly out of hearing, seemed always to me a little super-subtle; but it is certain that Tom's new professions did bear rather a suspicious analogy to the old, and the ferrets, and terriers, and mongrels by whom he was surrounded, "did really look," as the worthy keeper observed, "fitter to find Christian hares and pheasants, than rats and such vermin." So in good truth did Tom himself. Never did any human being look more like that sort of sportsman commonly called a poacher. He was a tall, finely-built man, with a prodigious stride, that cleared the ground like a horse, and a power of continuing his slow and steady speed, that seemed nothing less than miraculous. Neither man, nor horse, nor dog, could out-tire him. He had a bold, undaunted presence, and an evident strength and power of bone and muscle. You might see by looking at him, that he did not know what fear meant. In his youth he had fought more battles than any man in the forest. He was as if born without nerves, totally insensible to the recoils and disgusts of humanity. I have known him take up a huge adder, cut off its head, and then deposit the living and writhing body in his brimless hat, and walk with it coiling and wreathing about his head, like another Medusa, till the sport of the day was over, and he carried it home to secure the fat. With all this iron stubbornness of nature, he was of a most mild and gentle demeanour, had a fine placidity of countenance, and a quick blue eye beaming with good-humour. His face was sunburnt into one general pale vermilion hue that overspread all his features; his very hair was sunburnt too. His costume was generally a smock-frock of no doubtful complexion, dirt-coloured, which hung round him in tatters like fringe, rather augmenting than diminishing the freedom, and, if I may so say, the gallantry of his bearing. This frock was furnished with a huge inside pocket, in which to deposit the game killed by his patrons—for of his three employments, that which consisted of finding hares for the great farmers and small gentry, who were wont to course on the common, was by far the most profitable and most pleasing to him, and to them. Every body liked Tom Cordery. He had himself an aptness to like, which is certain to be repaid in kind—the very dogs knew him, and loved him, and would beat for him almost as soon as for their master. Even May, the most sagacious of greyhounds,

appreciated his talents, and would as soon listen to Tom sohoing as to old Tray giving tongue.

Nor was his conversation less agreeable to the other part of the company. Servants and masters were equally desirous to secure Tom. Besides his general and professional familiarity with beasts and birds, their ways and doings, a knowledge so minute and accurate, that it might have put to shame many a professed naturalist, he had no small acquaintance with the goings-on of that unfeathered biped called man; in short, he was, next after Lucy, who recognized his rivalry by hating, decrying, and undervaluing him, by far the best newsgatherer of the country side. His news he of course picked up on the civilized side of the parish, (there is no gossiping in the forest,) partly at that well-frequented inn the Red Lion, of which Tom was a regular and noted supporter—partly amongst his several employers, and partly by his own sagacity. In the matter of marriages, (pairings he was wont to call them,) he relied chiefly on his own skill in noting certain preliminary indications; and certainly for a guesser by profession and a very bold one, he was astonishingly often right. At the alehouse especially, he was of the first authority. An air of mild importance, a diplomatic reserve on some points, great smoothness of speech, and that gentleness which is so often the result of conscious power, made him there an absolute ruler. Perhaps the effect of these causes might be a little aided by the latent dread which that power inspired in others. Many an exploit had proved that Tom Cordery's one arm was fairly worth any two on the common. The pommelling of Bob Arlott, and the levelling of Jem Serle to the earth by one swing of a huge old hare, (which unusual weapon was by the way the first-slain of Mayflower, on its way home to us in that walking cupboard, his pocket, when the unlucky rencontre with Jem Serle broke two heads, the dead and the living,) arguments such as these might have some cogency at the Red Lion.

But he managed every body, as your gentle-mannered person is apt to do. Even the rude 'squires and rough farmers, his temporary masters, he managed, particularly as far as concerned the beat, and was sure to bring them round to his own peculiar fancies and prejudices, however strongly their own wishes might turn them aside from the direction indicated, and however often Tom's sagacity in that instance might have been found at fault. Two spots in the large wild enclosures into which the heath had been divided were his especial favourites; the Hundred Acres, alias the Poor Allotment, alias the Burnt Common —(Do any or all of these titles convey any notion of the real destination of that many-named place? a piece of moor-land portioned out to serve for fuel to the poor of the parish) —this was one. Oh the barrenness of this miserable moor! Flat, marshy, dingy, bare. Here that piece of green treachery, a bog; there parched, and pared, and shrivelled, and black with smoke and ashes; utterly desolate and wretched every where, except where amidst the desolation blossomed, as in mockery, the enamelled gentianella. No hares ever came there; they had too much taste. Yet thither would Tom lead his unwary employers; thither, however warned, or cautioned, or experienced, would he by reasoning, or induction, or gentle persuasion, or actual fraud, entice the hapless gentlemen; and then to see him with his rabble of finders, pacing up and down this precious "sitting-ground," (for so was Tom, thriftless liar, wont to call it,) pretending to look for game, counterfeiting a meuse; forging a form; and telling a story some ten years old of a famous hare once killed in that spot by his honour's favourite bitch Marygold. I never could thoroughly understand whether it were design, a fear that too many hares might be killed, or a real and honest mistake, a genuine prejudice in favour of the place, that influenced Tom Cordery in this point. Half the one, perhaps, and half the other. Mixed motives, let Pope and his disciples say what they will, are by far the commonest in this parti-coloured world. Or he had shared the fate of greater men, and lied till he believed—a coursing Cromwell, beginning in hypocrisy and ending in fanaticism. Another pet spot was the Gallows-piece, an enclosure almost as large as the Hundred Acres, where a gibbet had once borne the bodies of two murderers, with the chains and bones, even in my remembrance, clanking and creaking in the wind. The gibbet was gone now; but the name remained, and the feeling, deep, sad, and shuddering. The place, too, was wild, awful, fearful; a heathy, furzy spot, sinking into broken hollows, where murderers might lurk; a few withered pines at the upper end, and amongst them, half hidden by the brambles, the stone in which the gallows had been fixed:—the bones must have been mouldering beneath. All Tom's eloquence, seconded by two capital courses, failed to drag me thither a second time.

Tom was not, however, without that strong sense of natural beauty which they who live amongst the wildnesses and fastnesses of nature so often exhibit. One spot, where the common trenches on the civilized world, was scarcely less his admiration than mine. It is a high hill, half covered with furze and heath, and broom, and sinking abruptly down to a large pond, almost a lake, covered with wild water-fowl. The ground, richly clothed with wood, oak and beech and elm, rises on the other side with equal abruptness, as if shutting in those glassy waters from all but the sky, which shines so brightly in their clear bosom: just in the bottom peeps a small

sheltered farm, whose wreaths of light smoke and the white glancing wings of the wild-ducks, as they flit across the lake, are all that give token of motion or of life. I have stood there in utter oblivion of greyhound or of hare, till moments have swelled to minutes, and minutes to hours; and so has Tom, conveying by his exclamations of delight at its "pleasantness," exactly the same feeling which a poet or a painter (for it breathes the very spirit of calm and sunshiny beauty that a master-painter loves) would express by different but not truer praise. He called his own home "pleasant" too; and there, though one loves to hear any home so called—there, I must confess, that favourite phrase, which I like almost as well as they who have no other, did seem rather misapplied. And yet it was finely placed, very finely. It stood in a sort of defile, where a road almost perpendicular wound from the top of a steep abrupt hill, crowned with a tuft of old Scottish firs, into a dingle of fern and wild brushwood. A shallow, sullen stream oozed from the bank on one side, and, after forming a rude channel across the road, sank into a dark, deep pool, half hidden among the sallows. Behind these sallows, in a nook between them and the hill, rose the uncouth and shapeless cottage of Tom Cordery. It is a scene which hangs upon the eye and the memory, striking, grand, almost sublime, and above all eminently foreign. No English painter would choose such a subject for an English landscape; no one in a picture would take it for English. It might pass for one of those scenes which have furnished models to Salvator Rosa. Tom's cottage was, however, very thoroughly national and characteristic; a low, ruinous hovel, the door of which was fastened with a sedulous attention to security, that contrasted strangely with the tattered thatch of the roof, and the half-broken windows. No garden, no pigsty, no pens for geese, none of the usual signs of cottage habitation:—yet the house was covered with nondescript dwellings, and the very walls were animated with their extraordinary tenants; pheasants, partridges, rabbits, tame wild ducks, half-tame hares, and their enemies by nature and education, the ferrets, terriers, and mongrels of whom his retinue consisted. Great ingenuity had been evinced in keeping separate these jarring elements; and by dint of hutches, cages, fences, kennels and half a dozen little hurdled enclosures, resembling the sort of courts which children are apt to build round their card-houses, peace was in general tolerably well preserved. Frequent sounds, however, of fear or anger, as their several instincts were aroused, gave token that it was but a forced and hollow truce, and at such times the clamour was prodigious. Tom had the remarkable tenderness for animals when domesticated, which is so often found in those whose sole vocation seems to be their destruction in the field; and the one long, straggling, unceiled, barn-like room, which served for kitchen, bed-chamber, and hall, was cumbered with bipeds and quadrupeds of all kinds and descriptions—the sick, the delicate, the newly-caught, the lying in. In the midst of this menagerie sate Tom's wife, (for he was married, though without a family—married to a woman lame of a leg as he himself was minus an arm,) now trying to quiet her noisy inmates, now to outscold them. How long his friend the keeper would have continued to wink at this den of live game, none can say; the roof fairly fell in during the deep snow of last winter, killing, as poor Tom observed, two as fine litters of rabbits as ever were kittened. Remotely, I have no doubt that he himself fell a sacrifice to this misadventure. The overseer, to whom he applied to reinstate his beloved habitation, decided that the walls would never bear another roof, and removed him and his wife, as an especial favour, to a tidy, snug, comfortable room in the workhouse. The workhouse! From that, poor Tom visibly altered. He lost his hilarity and independence. It was a change such as he had himself often inflicted, a complete change of habits, a transition from the wild to the tame. No labour was demanded of him; he went about as before, finding hares, killing rats, selling brooms, but the spirit of the man was departed. He talked of the quiet of his old abode, and the noise of the new; complained of children and other bad company; and looked down on his neighbours with the sort of contempt with which a cock pheasant might regard a barn-door fowl. Most of all did he, braced into a gipsy-like defiance of wet and cold, grumble at the warmth and dryness of his apartment. He used to foretell that it would kill him, and assuredly it did so. Never could the typhus fever have found out that wild hill side, or have lurked under that broken roof. The free touch of the air would have chased the demon. Alas, poor Tom! warmth and snugness, and comfort, whole windows, and an entire ceiling, were the death of him. Alas, poor Tom!

AN OLD BACHELOR.

There is no effect of the subtle operation of the association of ideas more universal and more curious than the manner in which the most trivial circumstances recall particular persons to our memory. Sometimes these glances of recollection are purely pleasurable. Thus I have a double liking for a May-day, as being the birth-day of a dear friend whose fair idea bursts upon me with the first sunbeam of that glad morning; and I can never

hear certain airs of Mozart and Handel without seeming to catch an echo of that sweetest voice in which I first learnt to love them. Pretty often, however, the point of association is less elegant, and occasionally it is tolerably ludicrous. We happened to-day to have for dinner a couple of wild-ducks, the first of the season; and as the master of the house, who is so little of an epicure that I am sure he would never while he lived, out of its feathers, know a wild-duck from a tame,—whilst he, with a little affectation of science, was squeezing the lemon and mixing Cayenne pepper with the gravy, two of us exclaimed in a breath, "Poor Mr. Sidney!"—"Ay," rejoined the squeezer of lemons, "poor Sidney! I think he would have allowed that these ducks were done even to half a turn." And then he told the story more elaborately to a young visiter, to whom Mr. Sidney was unknown; —how, after eating the best parts of a couple of wild-ducks, which all the company pronounced to be the finest and the best dressed wild-ducks ever brought to the table, that judicious critic in the gastronomic art limited the too sweeping praise by gravely asserting, that the birds were certainly excellent, and that the cookery would have been excellent also, had they not been roasted half a turn too much. Mr. Sidney has been dead these fifteen years; but no wild-ducks have ever appeared on our homely board without recalling that observation. It is his memorable saying; his one good thing.

Mr. Sidney was, as might be conjectured, an epicure; he was also an old bachelor, a clergyman, and senior fellow of * * College, a post which he had long filled, being, although only a second son, so well provided for that he could afford to reject living after living in expectation of one favourite rectory, to which he had taken an early fancy from the pleasantness of the air. Of the latter quality, indeed, he used to give an instance, which, however satisfactory as confirming his prepossession, could hardly have been quite agreeable, as preventing him from gratifying it;—namely, the extraordinary and provoking longevity of the incumbent, who at upwards of ninety gave no sign of decay, and bade fair to emulate the age of old Parr.

Whilst waiting for the expected living, Mr. Sidney, who disliked a college residence, built himself a very pretty house in our neighbourhood, which he called his home; and where he lived, as much as a love of Bath and Brighton and London and lords would let him. He counted many noble families amongst his near connections, and passed a good deal of his time at their country-seats—a life for which he was by character and habit peculiarly fitted.

In person he was a tall stout gentlemanly man, "about fifty, or by'r lady, inclining to threescore," with fine features, a composed gravity of countenance and demeanour, a bald head most accurately powdered, and a very graceful bow—quite the pattern of an elderly man of fashion. His conversation was in excellent keeping with the calm imperturbability of his countenance and the sedate gravity of his manner,—smooth, dull, commonplace, exceedingly safe, and somewhat imposing. He spoke so little, that people really fell into the mistake of imagining that he thought; and the tone of decision with which he would advance some second-hand opinion, was well calculated to confirm the mistake. Gravity was certainly his chief characteristic, and yet it was not a clerical gravity either. He had none of the generic marks of his profession. Although perfectly decorous in life and word and thought, no stranger ever took Mr. Sidney for a clergyman. He never did any duty any where, that ever I heard of, except the agreeable duty of saying grace before dinner; and even that was often performed by some lay host, in pure forgetfulness of his guest's ordination. Indeed, but for the direction of his letters, and an eye to * * * Rectory, I am persuaded that the circumstance might have slipped out of his own recollection.

His quality of old bachelor was more perceptible. There lurked under all his polish, well covered but not concealed, the quiet selfishness, the little whims, the precise habits, the primness and priggishness of that disconsolate condition. His man Andrews, for instance, valet, groom, and body-servant abroad; butler, cook, caterer, and major d'omo at home; tall, portly, powdered and blackcoated as his master, and like him in all things but the knowing pig-tail which stuck out horizontally above his shirt-collar, giving a ludicrous dignity to his appearance;—Andrews, who, constant as the dial pointed nine, carried up his chocolate and shaving water, and regular as "the chimes at midnight," prepared his white-wine whey; who never forgot his gouty shoe in travelling, (once for two days he had a slight touch of that gentlemanly disorder,) and never gave him the newspaper unaired; to whom could this jewel of a valet, this matchless piece of clock-work belong, but an old bachelor? And his little dog Viper, unparagoned of terriers, black, sleek, sharp, and shrewish; who would beg and sneeze and fetch and carry like a Christian; eat olives and sweetmeats and mustard, drink coffee and wine and liqueurs;—who but an old bachelor could have taught Viper his multifarious accomplishments?

Little Viper was a most useful person in his way; for although Mr. Sidney was a very creditable acquaintance to meet on the King's highway, (your dull man, if he rides well, should never think of dismounting,) or even on the level ground of a carpet in the crowd of a large party; yet when he happened to drop in to take a family dinner—a pretty fre-

quent habit of his when in the country—then Viper's talents were inestimable in relieving the ennuï occasioned by that grave piece of gentility his master, "not only *dull* in himself, but the cause of *dullness* in others." Any thing to pass away the heavy hours, till whist or piquet relieved the female world from his intolerable silence.

In other respects these visits were sufficiently perplexing. Every housewife can tell what a formidable guest is an epicure who comes to take pot-luck—how sure it is to be bad luck, especially when the unfortunate hostess lives five miles from a market-town. Mr. Sidney always came unseasonably, on washing-day, or Saturday, or the day before a great party. So sure as we had a scrap dinner, so sure came he. My dear mother, who with true benevolence and hospitality cared much for her guest's comfort and nothing for her own pride, used to grieve over his discomfiture, and try all that could be done by potted meats and omelettes, and little things tossed up on a sudden to amend the bill of fare. But cookery is an obstinate art, and will have its time;—however you may force the component parts, there is no forcing a dinner. Mr. Sidney had the evil habit of arriving just as the last bell rang; and in spite of all the hurry-scurry in the kitchen department, the new niceties and the old, homely dishes were sure to disagree. There was a total want of keeping. The kickshaws were half raw, the solids were mere rags; the vegetables were cold, the soup was scalding; no shallots to the rump-steaks; no mushrooms with the broiled chicken; no fish; no oysters; no ice; no pine-apple. Poor Mr. Sidney! He must have had a great regard for us to put up with our bad dinners.

Perhaps the chance of a rubber had something to do with his visits to our house. If there be such a thing as a ruling passion, the love of whist was his. Cards were not merely the amusement, but the business of his life. I do not mean as a money-making speculation; for although he belonged to a fashionable club in London, and to every card-meeting of decent gentility within reach of his country-home, he never went beyond a regular moderate stake, and could not be induced to bet even by the rashest defier of calculation, or the most provoking undervaluer of his play. It always seemed to me that he regarded whist as far too important and scientific a pursuit to be degraded into an affair of gambling. It had in his eyes all the dignity of a study; an acquirement equally gentlemanly and clerical. It was undoubtedly his test of ability. He had the value of a man of family and a man of the world, for rank, and wealth, and station, and dignities of all sorts. No human being entertained a higher respect for a king, a prince, a prime minister, a duke, a bishop, or a lord. But these were conventional feelings. His genuine and unfeigned veneration was reserved for him who played a good rubber, a praise he did not easily give. He was a capital player himself, and held all his country competitors, except one, in supreme and undisguised contempt, which they endured to admiration. I wonder they did not send him to Coventry. He was the most disagreeable partner in the world, and nearly as unpleasant an adversary; for he not only enforced the Pythagorean law of science, which makes one hate whist so, but used to distribute quite impartially to every one at table little disagreeable observations on every card they played. It was not scolding, or grumbling, or fretting; one has a sympathy with those expressions of feeling, and at the worst can scold again; it was a smooth polite commentary on the errors of the party, delivered in the calm tone of undoubted superiority with which a great critic will sometimes take a small poet, or a batch of poets, to task in a review. How the people could bear it!—but the world is a goodnatured world, and does not like a man the less for treating it scornfully.

So passed six evenings out of the seven with Mr. Sidney, for it was pretty well known that, on the rare occurrence of his spending a day at home without company, his fac-totum Andrews used to have the honour of being beaten by his master in a snug game at double dumby; but what he did with himself on Sunday occasioned me some speculation. Never in my life did I see him take up a book, although he sometimes talked of Shakspeare and Milton, and Johnson and Burke, in a manner which proved that he had heard of such things; and as to the newspaper, which he did read, that was generally conned over long before night; besides he never exhibited spectacles, and I have a notion that he could not read newspaper type at night without them. How he could possibly get through the after-coffee hours on a Sunday puzzled me long. Chance solved the problem. He came to call on us after church, and agreed to dine and sleep at our house. The moment tea was over, without the slightest apology or attempt at conversation, he drew his chair to the fire, set his feet on the fender, and fell fast asleep in the most comfortable and orderly manner possible. It was evidently a weekly habit. Every sense and limb seemed composed to it. Viper looked up in his face, curled himself round on the hearth-rug, and went to sleep too; and Andrews, just as the clock struck twelve, came in to wake him that he might go to bed. It was clearly an invariable custom; a settled thing.

His house and grounds were kept in the neatest manner possible. There was something even disagreeable in the excessive nicety, the Dutch preciseness of the shining gravel walks, the smooth shaven turf of the

lawn, and the fine-sifted mould of the shrubberies. A few dead leaves or scattered flowers, even a weed or two, any thing to take away from the artificial toy-like look of the place, would have been an improvement. Mr. Sidney, however, did not think so. He actually caused his gardener to remove those littering plants called roses and gum cistuses. Other flowers fared little better. No sooner were they in bloom, than he pulled them up for fear they should drop. In doors, matters were still worse. The rooms and furniture were very handsome, abounding in the luxurious Turkey carpets, the sofas, easy chairs, and Ottomans, which his habits required; and yet I never in my life saw any house which looked less comfortable. Every thing was so constantly in its place, so provokingly in order, so full of naked nicety, so thoroughly old-bachelorish. No work! no books! no music! no flowers! But for those two things of life, Viper and a sparkling fire, one might have thought the place uninhabited. Once a year, indeed, it gave signs of animation, in the shape of a Christmas party. That was Mr. Sidney's shining time. Nothing could exceed the smiling hospitality of the host, or the lavish profusion of the entertainment. It breathed the very spirit of a welcome, splendidly liberal; and little Viper frisked and bounded, and Andrew's tail vibrated (I was going to say wagged) with cordiality and pleasure. Andrews, on these occasions, laid aside his "customary black" in favour of a blue coat and a white silk court waistcoat, with a light running pattern of embroidery and silver spangles, assumed to do honour to his master and the company. How much he enjoyed the applause which the wines and the cookery elicited from the gentlemen; and how anxiously he would direct the ladies' attention to a MS. collection of riddles, the compilation of some deceased countess, laid on the drawing-room table for their amusement between dinner and tea. Once, I remember, he carried his attention so far as to produce a gone-by toy, called a bandalore, for the recreation of myself and another little girl, admitted by virtue of the Christmas holidays to this annual festival. Poor Andrews! I am convinced that he considered the entertainment of the visiters quite as much his affair as his master's; and certainly they both succeeded. Never did parties pass more pleasantly. On those evenings Mr. Sidney even forgot to find fault at whist.

At last, towards the end of a very severe winter, during which he had suffered much from repeated colds, the rectory of * * * became vacant, and our worthy neighbour hastened to take possession. The day before his journey he called on us in the highest spirits, anticipating a renewal of health and youth in this favourite spot, and approaching nearer than I had ever heard him to a jest on the subject of looking out for a wife. Married or single, he made us promise to visit him during the ensuing summer. Alas! long before the summer arrived, our poor friend was dead. He had waited for this living thirty years; he did not enjoy it thirty days.

A VILLAGE BEAU.

The finest young man in our village is undoubtedly Joel Brent, half-brother to my Lizzy. They are alike too; as much alike as a grown-up person and a little child of different sexes well can be; alike in a vigorous uprightness of form, light, firm, and compact as possible; alike in the bright, sparkling, triumphant blue eye, the short-curled upper lip, the brown wavy hair, the white forehead and sunburnt cheeks, and, above all, in the singular spirit and gaiety of their countenance and demeanour, the constant expression of life and glee, to which they owe the best and rarest part of their attractiveness. They seem, and they are two of the happiest and merriest creatures that ever trod on the greensward. Really to see Joel walking by the side of his team, (for this enviable mortal, the pride of our village, is by calling a carter), to see him walking, on a fine sunny morning, by the side of his bell-team, the fore-horse decked with ribbons and flowers like a countess on the birth-day, as consciously handsome as his driver, the long whip poised gracefully on his shoulder, his little sister in his hand, and his dog Ranger (a beautiful red and white spaniel —every thing that belongs to Joel is beautiful) frisking about them:—to see this group, and to hear the merry clatter formed by Lizzy's tongue, Joel's whistling, and Ranger's delighted bark, is enough to put an amateur of pleasant sounds and happy faces in good humour for the day.

It is a grateful sight in other respects, for Joel is a very picturesque person, just such an one as a painter would select for the foreground of some English landscape, where nature is shown in all her loveliness. His costume is the very perfection of rustic coquetry, of that grace, which all admire and few practise, the grace of adaptation, the beauty of fitness. No one ever saw Joel in that wretched piece of deformity a coat, or that still wretcheder apology for a coat a docktailed jacket. Broad-cloth, the "common stale" of peer and peasant, approaches him not; neither does "the poor creature," fustian. His upper garment consists of that prettier jacket without skirts, call it for the more grace a doublet, of dark velveteen, hanging open over his waistcoat, giving a Spanish or an Italian air to his whole appearance, and setting off to great advantage his trim yet manly shape. To this

he adds a silk handkerchief, tied very loosely round his neck, a shirt-collar open so as to show his throat, as you commonly see in the portraits of artists, very loose trowsers, and a straw hat. Sometimes in cold weather, he throws over all a smock-frock, and last winter brought up a fashion amongst our lads, by assuming one of that blue hight Waterloo, such as butchers wear. As soon as all his comrades had provided themselves with a similar piece of rustic finery, he abandoned his, and indeed generally sticks to his velveteen jacket, which, by some magical influence of cleanliness and neatness, always looks new. I cannot imagine how he contrives it, but dirt never hangs upon Joel; even a fall at cricket in the summer, or a tumble on the ice in the winter, fails to soil him; and he is so ardent in his diversions, and so little disposed to let his coxcombry interfere with his sports, that both have been pretty often tried; the former especially.

Ever since William Grey's secession, which took place shortly after our great match, for no cause assigned, Joel has been the leader and chief of our cricketers. Perhaps, indeed, Joel's rapid improvement might be one cause of William's withdrawal, for, without attributing any thing like envy or jealousy to these fine young men, we all know that "two stars keep not their motion in one sphere," and so forth, and if it were absolutely necessary that either our "Harry Hotspur, or the Prince of Wales," should abdicate that fair kingdom the cricket-ground, I must say that I am content to retain our present champion. Joel is in my mind the better player, joining to William's agility, and certainty of hand and eye, all the ardour, force, and gaiety of his own quick and lively spirit. The whole man is in the game, mind and body; and his success is such as dexterity and enthusiasm united must always command. To be sure he is a *leetle* over-eager, *that* I must confess, and does occasionally run out a slow mate; but he is sure to make up for it by his own exertions, and after all what a delightful fault zeal is! Now that we are on the subject of faults, it must be said, not that Joel has his share, which is of course, but that they are exceedingly venial, little shades that become him, and arise out of his brighter qualities as smoke from the flame. Thus, if he sometimes steals one of his active holidays for a revel or a cricket-match, he is sure to make up the loss to his master by a double portion of labour the next day; and if now and then at tide-times, he loiters in the chimney-corner of the Rose, rather longer than strict prudence might warrant, no one can hear his laugh and his song pouring through the open door, like the very voice of "jest and youthful jollity," without feeling certain that it is good fellowship, and not good liquor, that detains him. Indeed so much is he the delight of the country lads, who frequent that well-accustomed inn, so much is his company sought after in all rustic junketings, that I am only astonished at the strength of resolution, and power of resisting temptation, which he displays in going thither so seldom.

If our village lads be so fond of him, it is not to be doubted that our village maidens like him too. The pretty brunette, Sally Wheeler, who left a good service at B., to take in needlework, and come home to her grandmother, she being, to use Sally's phrase, "unked for want of company," (N. B. Dame Wheeler is as deaf as a post, a cannon would not rouse her,) is thought, in our little world, to have had an eye to Joel in this excess of dutifulness. Miss Phœbe, the lass of the Rose, she also, before her late splendid marriage to the patten-maker, is said to have becurled and beflounced herself at least two tiers higher on club-nights, and Sundays, and holidays, and whenever there was a probable chance of meeting him. The gay recruiting sergeant, and all other beaux were abandoned the instant he appeared; nay, it is even hinted, that the patten-maker owes his fair bride partly to pique at Joel's indifference. Then Miss Sophia Matthews, the schoolmistress on the lea, to whom in point of dignity Miss Phœbe was nothing, who wears a muff and a veil, walks mincingly, and tosses her head in the air, keeps a maid,—a poor little drab of ten years old; follows, as she says, a genteel profession,—I think she may have twenty scholars at eight-pence a week; and when she goes to dine with her brother, the collar-maker, hires a boy for a penny to carry her clogs; Miss Sophia, it is well known, hath pretermitted her dignity in the matter of Joel; hath invited the whole family to tea (only think of Joel at a tea-party?) hath spoken of him as "a person above the common: a respectable young man; one, who with a discreet and accomplished wife, a woman of reading and education," (Miss Sophia, in the days of her father, the late collar-maker of happy memory, before she "taught the young idea how to shoot," had herself drunk deeply at that well of knowledge, the circulating library of B.) "not too young," (Miss Sophia calls herself twenty-eight—I wonder what the register says!) "no brazen-faced gipsy, like Sally Wheeler," (Miss Sophia's cast of countenance is altogether different from Sally's dark and sparkling beauty, she being pink-eyed, red-haired, lean, pale, and freckled) "or the jill-flirt Phœbe"——but to cut short an oration which in spite of the lady's gentility, began to grow rather scurrilous, one fact was certain,—that Joel might, had he so chosen, have worn the crown matrimonial in Miss Sophia's territories, consisting of a freehold-cottage, a little the worse for wear, a good garden, a capital orchard, and an extensive right of common; to say nothing of the fair damsel and her school, or, as she is accustomed to call it, her seminary.

Joel's proud bright eye glanced, however, carelessly over all. There was little percepti-

ble difference of feeling in the gay distant smile, with which he regarded the coquettish advances of the pretty brunette, Sally Wheeler, or the respectful bow with which he retreated from the dignified condescension of Miss Sophia. He fluttered about our village belles like a butterfly over a bed of tulips; sometimes approaching them for a moment, and seeing them ready to fix, but oftener above and out of reach, a creature of a sprightlier element, too buoyant and volatile to light on an earthly flower. At last, however, the rover was caught; and our damsel, Harriet, had the glory of winning that indomitable heart.

Now Harriet is in all things Lucy's successor; in post, and favour, and beauty, and lovers. In my eye she is still prettier than Lucy; there is something so feminine and so attractive in her loveliness. She is a tall young woman, finely, though, for eighteen, rather fully formed; with a sweet child-like face, a fair blooming complexion, a soft innocent smile, and the eye of a dove. Add to this a gentle voice, a quiet modest manner, and a natural gentility of appearance, and no wonder that Harriet might vie with her predecessor in the number of her admirers. She inherited also a spice of her coquetry, although it was shown in so different a way that we did not immediately find it out. Lucy was a flirt active; Harriet was a flirt passive: Lucy talked to her beaux; Harriet only listened to her's; Lucy, when challenged on the number of her conquests, denied the thing, and blushed, and laughed, and liked to be laughed at; Harriet, on a similar charge, gave no token of liking or denial, but said quietly that she could not help it, and went on winning hearts by dozens, prodigal of smiles but chary of love, till Joel came, "pleased her by manners most unlike her own," and gave to her delicate womanly beauty the only charms it wanted—sensibility and consciousness.

The manner in which we discovered this new flirtation, which, unlike her others, was concealed with the pretty reserve and mystery that wait on true love, was sufficiently curious. We had noted Joel more frequently than common about the house: sometimes he came for Lizzy; sometimes to bring news of a cricket-match; sometimes to ask questions about bats and balls; sometimes to see if his dog Ranger had followed my May; sometimes to bring me a nosegay. All this occasioned no suspicion; we were too glad to see Joel to think of inquiring why he came. But when the days shortened, and evening closed in dark and cold before his work was done, and cricket and flowers were over, and May and Lizzy safe in their own warm beds, and poor Joel's excuses fairly at an end; then it was, that in the after-dinner pause about seven, when the clatter of plates and dishes was over, that the ornithological ear of the master of the house, a dabbler in natural history, was struck by a regular and melodious call, the note, as he averred, of a sky-lark. That a sky-lark should sing in front of our house, at seven o'clock in a December evening, seemed, to say the least, rather startling. But our ornithologist happening to agree with Mr. White, of Selborne, in the opinion, that many more birds sing by night than is commonly supposed, and becoming more and more confident of the identity of the note, thought the thing possible; and not being able to discover any previous notice of the fact, had nearly inserted it, as an original observation, in the Naturalist's Calendar, when running out suddenly one moonlight night, to try for a peep at the nocturnal songster, he caught our friend Joel, whose accomplishments in this line we had never dreamt of, in the act of whistling a summons to his lady-love.

For some weeks our demure coquette listened to none but this bird-like wooing; partly from pride in the conquest; partly from real preference; and partly, I believe, from a lurking consciousness that Joel was by no means a lover to be trifled with. Indeed he used to threaten, between jest and earnest, a ducking in the goose-pond opposite, to whoever should presume to approach his fair intended; and the waters being high and muddy, and he at all points a formidable rival, most of her former admirers were content to stay away. At last, however, she relapsed into her old sin of listening. A neighbouring farmer gave a ball in his barn, to which both our lovers were invited and went. Now Harriet loves dancing, and Joel, though arrayed in a new jacket, and thin cricketing pumps, would not dance; he said he could not, but that, as Harriet observes, is incredible. I agree with her that the gentleman was too fine. He chose to stand and look on, and laugh, and make laugh, the whole evening. In the meantime his fair betrothed picked up a new partner, and a new beau, in the shape of a freshly-arrived carpenter, a grand martial-looking figure, as tall as a grenadier, who was recently engaged as foreman to our civil wheeler, and who, even if he had heard of the denunciation, was of a size and spirit to set Joel and the goose-pond at defiance,—David might as well have attempted to goose-pond Goliath! He danced the whole evening with his pretty partner, and afterwards saw her home; all of which Joel bore with great philosophy. But the next night he came again; and Joel approaching to give his own sky-lark signal, was startled at seeing another lover leaning over the wicket, and his faithless mistress standing at the half-open door, listening to the tall carpenter, just as complacently as she was wont to do to himself. He passed on without speaking, turned down the little lane that leads to Dame Wheeler's cottage, and in less than two minutes Harriet heard the love-call sounded at Sally's gate. The effect was instantaneous; she discarded the tall carpenter at once

and for ever, locked and bolted the door, and sat down to work or to cry in the kitchen. She did not cry long. The next night we again heard the note of the sky-lark louder and more brilliant than ever, echoing across our court, and the lovers, the better friends for their little quarrel, have been as constant as turtle-doves ever since.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE HARD SUMMER.

August 15th.—Cold, cloudy, windy, wet. Here we are, in the midst of the dog-days, clustering merrily round the warm hearth, like so many crickets, instead of chirruping in the green fields like that other merry insect the grasshopper; shivering under the influence of the *Jupiter Pluvius* of England, the watery St. Swithin; peering at that scarce personage the sun, when he happens to make his appearance, as intently as astronomers look after a comet, or the common people stare at a balloon; exclaiming against the cold weather, just as we used to exclaim against the warm. "What a change from last year!" is the first sentence you hear, go where you may. Every body remarks it, and every body complains of it; and yet in my mind it has its advantages, or at least its compensations, as every thing in nature has, if we would only take the trouble to seek for them.

Last year in spite of the love which we are now pleased to profess towards that ardent luminary, not one of the sun's numerous admirers had courage to look him in the face: there was no bearing the world till he had said "Good-night" to it. Then we might stir; then we began to wake and to live. All day long we languished under his influence in a strange dreaminess, too hot to work, too hot to read, too hot to write, too hot even to talk; sitting hour after hour in a green arbour, embowered in leafiness, letting thought and fancy float as they would. Those day-dreams were pretty things in their way; there is no denying that. But then, if one half of the world were to dream through a whole summer, like the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, what would become of the other?

The only office requiring the slightest exertion, which I performed in that warm weather, was watering my flowers. Common sympathy called for that labour. The poor things withered, and faded, and pined away; they almost, so to say, panted for drought. Moreover, if I had not watered them myself, I suspect that no one else would; for water last year was nearly as precious hereabout as wine. Our land-springs were dried up; our wells were exhausted; our deep ponds were dwindling into mud; and geese, and ducks, and pigs, and laundresses, used to look with a jealous and suspicious eye on the few and scanty half-buckets of that impure element, which my trusty lacquey was fain to filch for my poor geraniums and campanulas and tuberoses. We were forced to smuggle them in through my faithful adherent's territories, the stable, to avoid lectures within doors; and at last even that resource failed; my garden, my blooming garden, the joy of my eyes, was forced to go waterless like its neighbours, and became shrivelled, scorched, and sunburnt, like them. It really went to my heart to look at it.

On the other side of the house matters were still worse. What a dusty world it was when about sunset we became cool enough to creep into it! Flowers in the court looked fit for a *hortus siccus;* mummies of plants, dried as in an oven; hollyhocks, once pink, turned into Quakers; cloves smelling of dust. Oh dusty world! May herself looked of that complexion; so did Lizzy; so did all the houses, windows, chickens, children, trees, and pigs in the village; so above all did the shoes. No foot could make three plunges into that abyss of pulverised gravel, which had the impudence to call itself a hard road, without being clothed with a coat a quarter of an inch thick. Woe to white gowns! woe to black! Drab was your only wear.

Then, when we were out of the street, what a toil it was to mount the hill, climbing with weary steps and slow upon the brown turf by the wayside, slippery, hot, and hard as a rock! And then if we happened to meet a carriage coming along the middle of the road,—the bottomless middle,—what a sandy whirlwind it was! What choking! what suffocation! No state could be more pitiable, except indeed that of the travellers who carried this misery about with them. I shall never forget the plight in which we met the coach one evening in last August, full an hour after its time, steeds and driver, carriage and passengers, all one dust. The outsides and the horses and the coachman, seemed reduced to a torpid quietness, the resignation of despair. They had left off trying to better their condition, and taken refuge in a wise and patient hopelessness, bent to endure in silence the extremity of ill. The six insides, on the contrary, were still fighting against their fate, vainly struggling to ameliorate their hapless destiny. They were visibly grumbling at the weather, scolding the dust, and heating themselves like a furnace, by striving against the heat. How well I remember the fat gentleman without his coat, who was wiping his forehead, heaving up his wig, and certainly uttering that English ejaculation, which, to our national reproach, is the phrase of our language best known on the continent. And that poor boy, red-hot, all in a flame, whose mamma, having divested her own person of all su-

perfluous apparel, was trying to relieve his sufferings by the removal of his neck-kerchief —an operation which he resisted with all his might. How perfectly I remember him, as well as the pale girl who sate opposite fanning herself with her bonnet into an absolute fever! They vanished after a while in their own dust; but I have them all before my eyes at this moment, a companion-picture to Hogarth's Afternoon, a standing lesson to the grumblers at cold summers.

For my part I really like this wet season. It keeps us within, to be sure, rather more than is quite agreeable; but then we are at least awake and alive there, and the world out of doors is so much the pleasanter when we can get abroad.—Every thing does well, except those fastidious bipeds, men and women; corn ripens, grass grows, fruit is plentiful; there is no lack of birds to eat it, and there has not been such a wasp-season these dozen years. My garden wants no watering, and is more beautiful than ever, beating my old rival in that primitive art, the pretty wife of the little mason, out and out. Measured with mine, her flowers are nought. Look at those hollyhocks, like pyramids of roses; those garlands of the convolvulus major of all colours, hanging around that tall pole, like the wreathy hop-vine; those magnificent dusky cloves, breathing of the Spice Islands; those flaunting double dahlias; those splendid scarlet geraniums, and those fierce and warlike flowers the tiger-lilies. Oh how beautiful they are! Besides, the weather clears sometimes—it has cleared this evening; and here are we, after a merry walk up the hill, almost as quick as in the winter, bounding lightly along the bright green turf of the pleasant common, enticed by the gay shouts of a dozen clear young voices, to linger awhile, and see the boys play at cricket.

I plead guilty to a strong partiality towards that unpopular class of beings, country boys: I have a large acquaintance amongst them, and I can almost say, that I know good of many and harm of none. In general they are an open, spirited, good-humoured race, with a proneness to embrace the pleasures and eschew the evils of their condition, a capacity for happiness, quite unmatched in man, or woman, or girl. They are patient, too, and bear their fate as scape-goats (for all sins whatsoever are laid, as matters of course, to their door, whether at home or abroad,) with amazing resignation; and, considering the many lies of which they are the objects, they tell wonderfully few in return. The worst that can be said of them is, that they seldom, when grown to man's estate keep the promise of their boyhood; but that is a fault to come—a fault that may not come, and ought not to be anticipated. It is astonishing how sensible they are to notice from their betters, or those whom they think such. I do not speak of money, or gifts, or praise, or the more coarse and common briberies—they are more delicate courtiers; a word, a nod, a smile, or the mere calling of them by their names, is enough to insure their hearts and their services. Half a dozen of them, poor urchins, have run away now to bring us chairs from their several homes. "Thank you, Joe Kirby!—you are always first—yes, that is just the place.—I shall see every thing there. Have you been in yet, Joe?"—"No, ma'am! I go in next."—"Ah, I am glad of that—and now's the time. Really, that was a pretty ball of Jem Eusden's!—I was sure it would go to the wicket. Run, Joe, they are waiting for you." There was small need to bid Joe Kirby make haste; I think he is, next to a race-horse, or a greyhound, or a deer, the fastest creature that runs —the most completely alert and active. Joe is mine especial friend and leader of the "tender juveniles," as Joel Brent is of the adults. In both instances this post of honour was gained by merit, even more remarkably so in Joe's case than in Joel's; for Joe is a less boy than many of his companions, (some of whom are fifteeners and sixteeners, quite as tall and nearly as old as Tom Coper) and poorer than all, as may be conjectured from the lamentable state of that patched round frock, and the ragged condition of those unpatched shoes, which would encumber, if any thing could, the light feet that wear them. But why should I lament the poverty that never troubles him? Joe is the merriest and happiest creature that ever lived twelve years in this wicked world. Care cannot come near him. He hath a perpetual smile on his round ruddy face, and a laugh in his hazel-eye, that drives the witch away. He works at yonder farm on the top of the hill, where he is in such repute for intelligence and good-humour, that he has the honour of performing all the errands of the house, or helping the maid, and the mistress, and the master, in addition to his own stated office of carter's boy. There he works hard from five till seven, and then he comes here to work still harder under the name of play—batting, bowling, and fielding as if for life, filling the place of four boys; being at a pinch, a whole eleven. The late Mr. Knyvett, the king's organist, who used in his own person to sing twenty parts at once of the hallelujah chorus, so that you would have thought he had a nest of nightingales in his throat, was but a type of Joe Kirby. There is a sort of ubiquity about him; he thinks nothing of being in two places at once, and for pitching a ball William Grey himself is nothing to him. It goes straight to the mark like a bullet. He is king of the cricketers from eight to sixteen, both inclusive, and an excellent ruler he makes. Nevertheless, in the best-ordered states there will be grumblers, and we have an opposition here in the shape of Jem Eusden.

Jem Eusden is a stunted lad of thirteen, or

thereabout, lean, small, and short, yet strong and active. His face is of an extraordinary ugliness, colourless, withered, haggard, with a look of extreme age, much increased by hair so light that it might rather pass for white than flaxen. He is constantly arrayed in the blue cap and old-fashioned coat, the costume of an endowed school to which he belongs; where he sits still all day, and rushes into the field at night, fresh, untired, and ripe for action, to scold, and brawl, and storm, and bluster. He hates Joe Kirby, whose immoveable good-humour, broad smiles, and knowing nods, must certainly be very provoking to so fierce and turbulent a spirit; and he has himself (being, except by rare accident, no great player,) the preposterous ambition of wishing to be manager of the sports. In short, he is a demagogue in embryo, with every quality necessary to a splendid success in that vocation,—a strong voice, a fluent utterance, an incessant iteration, and a frontless impudence. He is a great "scholar," too, to use the country phrase; his "piece," as our village schoolmaster terms a fine sheet of flourishing writing, something between a valentine and a sampler, enclosed within a border of little coloured prints—his last, I remember, was encircled by an engraved history of Moses, beginning at the finding in the bulrushes, with Pharaoh's daughter, dressed in a rose-coloured gown and blue feathers,—his piece is not only the admiration of the school but of the parish, and is sent triumphantly around from house to house at Christmas, to extort halfpence and sixpences from all encouragers of learning —*Montem* in miniature. The Mosaic history was so successful, that the produce enabled Jem to purchase a bat and ball, which, besides adding to his natural arrogance (for the little pedant actually began to mutter against being eclipsed by a dunce, and went so far as to challenge Joe Kirby to a trial in Practice, or the Rule of Three,) gave him, when compared with the general poverty, a most unnatural preponderance in the cricket state. He had the ways and means in his hands—(for alas! the hard winter had made sad havoc among the bats, and the best ball was a bad one)—he had the ways and means, could withhold the supplies, and his party was beginning to wax strong, when Joe received a present of two bats and a ball for the youngsters in general, and himself in particular—and Jem's adherents left him on the spot—they ratted, to a man, that very evening. Notwithstanding this desertion, their forsaken leader has in nothing relaxed from his pretensions, or his ill-humour. He still quarrels and brawls as if he had a faction to back him, and thinks nothing of contending with both sides, the ins and outs, secure of out-talking the whole field. He has been squabbling these ten minutes, and is just marching off now with his own bat (he never deigned to use one of Joe's) in his hand. What an ill-conditioned hobgoblin it is! And yet there is something bold and sturdy about him too. I should miss Jem Eusden.

Ah, there is another deserter from the party! my friend the little huzzar—I do not know his name, and call him after his cap and jacket. He is a very remarkable person, about the age of eight years, the youngest piece of gravity and dignity I ever encountered; short, and square, and upright, and slow, with a fine bronzed flat visage, resembling those convertible signs the Broad-Face and the Saracen's Head, which, happening to be next-door neighbours in the town of B., I never know apart, resembling, indeed, any face that is open-eyed and immoveable, the very sign of a boy! He stalks about with his hands in his breeches pocket, like a piece of machinery; sits leisurely down when he ought to field, and never gets farther in batting than to stop the ball. His is the only voice never heard in the *melée*; I doubt, indeed, if he have one, which may be partly the reason of a circumstance that I record to his honour, his fidelity to Jem Eusden, to whom he has adhered through every change of fortune with a tenacity proceeding perhaps from an instinctive consciousness that that loquacious leader talks enough for two. He is the only thing resembling a follower that our demagogue possesses, and is cherished by him accordingly. Jem quarrels for him, scolds for him, pushes for him; and but for Joe Kirby's invincible good humour, and a just discrimination of the innocent from the guilty, the activity of Jem's friendship would get the poor hussar ten drubbings a day.

But it is growing late. The sun has set a long time. Only see what a gorgeous colouring has spread itself over those parting masses of clouds in the west,—what a train of rosy light! We shall have a fine sunshiny day tomorrow,—a blessing not to be undervalued, in spite of my late vituperation of heat. Shall we go home now? And shall we take the longest but prettiest road, that by the green lanes? This way, to the left, round the corner of the common, past Mrs. Welles's cottage, and our path lies straight before us. How snug and comfortable that cottage looks! Its little yard all alive with the cow, and the mare, and the colt almost as large as the mare, and the young foal, and the great yard-dog all so fat! Fenced in with hay-rick, and wheat-rick, and bean-stack, and backed by the long garden, the spacious drying-ground, the fine orchard, and that large field quartered into four different crops. How comfortable this cottage looks, and how well the owners earn their comforts! They are the most prosperous pair in the parish—she a laundress with twenty times more work than she can do, unrivalled in flounces and shirt-frills, and such delicacies of the craft; he, partly a farmer, partly a farmer's man, tilling his own ground, and then

tilling other people's;—affording a proof, even in this declining age, when the circumstances of so many worthy members of the community seem to have "an alacrity in sinking," that it is possible to amend them by sheer industry. He, who was born in the workhouse, and bred up as a parish boy, has now, by mere manual labour, risen to the rank of a land-owner, pays rates and taxes, grumbles at the times, and is called Master Welles,—the title next to Mister —that by which Shakspeare was called;—what would man have more? His wife, besides being the best laundress in the county, is a comely woman still. There she stands at the spring, dipping up water for to-morrow,—the clear, deep, silent spring, which sleeps so peacefully under its high flowery bank, red with the tall spiral stalks of the foxglove and their rich pendent bells, blue with the beautiful forget-me-not, that gem-like blossom, which looks like a living jewel of turquoise and topaz. It is almost too late to see its beauty; and here is the pleasant shady lane, where the high elms will shut out the little twilight that remains. Ah, but we shall have the fairies' lamps to guide us, the stars of the earth, the glow-worms! Here they are, three almost together. Do you not see them? One seems tremulous, vibrating, as if on the extremity of a leaf of grass; the others are deeper in the hedge, in some green cell on which their light falls with an emerald lustre. I hope my friends the cricketers will not come this way home. I would not have the pretty creatures removed for more than I care to say, and in this matter I would hardly trust Joe Kirby—boys so love to stick them in their hats. But this lane is quite deserted. It is only a road from field to field. No one comes here at this hour. They are quite safe; and I shall walk here to-morrow and visit them again. And now, good night! beautiful insects, lamps of the fairies, good night!

THE TALKING GENTLEMAN.

The lords of the creation, who are generally (to do them justice) tenacious enough of their distinctive and peculiar faculties and powers, have yet by common consent made over to the females the single gift of loquacity. Every man thinks and says that every woman talks more than he: it is the creed of the whole sex,—the debates and law reports notwithstanding. And every masculine eye that has scanned my title has already, I doubt not, looked to the *errata*, suspecting a mistake in the gender; but it is their misconception, not my mistake. I do not (Heaven forbid!) intend to impugn or abrogate our female privilege; I do not dispute that we do excel, generally speaking, in the use of the tongue; I only mean to assert that one gentleman does exist, (whom I have the pleasure of knowing intimately,) who stands pre-eminent and unrivalled in the art of talking,—unmatched and unapproached by man, woman, or child. Since the decease of my poor friend "the Talking Lady," who dropped down speechless in the midst of a long story about nine weeks ago, and was immediately known to be dead by her silence, I should be at a loss where to seek a competitor to contend with him in a race of words, and I should be still more puzzled to find one that can match him in wit, pleasantry, or good-humour.

My friend is usually called Harry L., for, though a man of substance, a lord of land, a magistrate, a field officer of militia, nobody ever dreamed of calling him *Mister* or major, or by any such derogatory title—he is and will be all his life plain Harry, the name of universal good-will. He is indeed the pleasantest fellow that lives. His talk (one can hardly call it conversation, as that would seem to imply another interlocutor, something like reciprocity) is an incessant flow of good things, like Congreve's comedies without a replying speaker, or Joe Miller laid into one; and its perpetual stream is not lost and dispersed by diffusion, but runs in one constant channel, playing and sparkling like a fountain, the delight and ornament of our good town of B.

Harry L. is a perfect example of provincial reputation, of local fame. There is not an urchin in the town that has not heard of him, nor an old woman that does not chuckle by anticipation at his approach. The citizens of B. are as proud of him as the citizens of Antwerp were of the *Chapeau de Paille*, and they have the advantage of the luckless Flemings in the certainty that their boast is not to be purchased. Harry, like the Flemish Beauty, is native to the spot; for he was born at B., educated at B., married at B.,—though, as his beautiful wife brought him a good estate in a distant part of the country, there seemed at that epoch of his history some danger of his being lost to our ancient borough; but he is a social and gregarious animal; so he leaves his pretty place in Devonshire to take care of itself, and lives here in the midst of a hive. His tastes are not at all rural. He is no sportsman, no farmer, no lover of strong exercise. When at B., his walks are quite regular; from his own house, on one side of the town, to a gossip-shop called "literary" on the other, where he talks and reads newspapers, and others read newspapers and listen: thence he proceeds to another house of news, similar in kind, though differing in name, in an opposite quarter, where he and his hearers undergo the same process, and then he returns home, forming a pretty exact triangle of about half a mile. This is his daily exercise, or rather his daily walk; of exercise he takes abundance, not only in talking, (though that

is nearly as good to open the chest as the dumb-bells,) but in a general restlessness and fidgetiness of person, the result of his ardent and nervous temperament, which can hardly endure repose of mind or body. He neither gives rest nor takes it. His company is, indeed, in one sense (only one) fatiguing. Listening to him tires you like a journey. You laugh till you are forced to lie down. The medical gentlemen of the place are aware of this, and are accustomed to exhort delicate patients to abstain from Harry's society, just as they caution them against temptations in point of amusement or of diet—pleasant but dangerous. Choleric gentlemen should always avoid him, and such as love to have the last word; for, though never provoked himself, I cannot deny that he is occasionally tolerably provoking,—in politics especially—(and he is an ultra-liberal, quotes Cobbett, and goes rather too far)—in politics he loves to put his antagonist in a fume, and generally succeeds, though it is nearly the only subject on which he ever listens to an answer—chiefly I believe for the sake of a reply, which is commonly some trenchant repartee, that cuts off the poor answer's head like a razor. Very determined speakers would also do well to eschew his company—though in general I never met with any talker to whom other talkers were so ready to give way; perhaps because he keeps them in such incessant laughter, that they are not conscious of their silence. To himself the number of his listeners is altogether unimportant. His speech flows not from vanity or lust of praise, but from sheer necessity;—the reservoir is full, and runs over. When he has no one else to talk to, he can be content with his own company, and talks to himself, being beyond a doubt greater in soliloquy than any man off the stage. Where he is not known, this habit sometimes occasions considerable consternation, and very ridiculous mistakes. He has been taken alternately for an actor, a poet, a man in love, and a man beside himself. Once in particular, at Windsor, he greatly alarmed a philanthropic sentinel, by holding forth at his usual rate whilst pacing the terrace alone; and but for the opportune arrival of his party, and their assurances that it was only "the gentleman's way," there was some danger that the benevolent soldier might have been tempted to desert his post to take care of him. Even after this explanation, he gazed with a doubtful eye at our friend, who was haranguing himself in great style, sighed and shook his head, and finally implored us to look well after him till he should be safe off the terrace.—"You see, ma'am," observed the philanthropist in scarlet, "it is an awkward place for any body troubled with vagaries. Suppose the poor soul should take a fancy to jump over the wall?"

In his externals he is a well-looking gentleman of forty, or thereabout; rather thin and rather pale, but with no appearance of ill-health, or any other peculiarity, except the remarkable circumstance of the lashes of one eye being white, which gives a singular non-resemblance to his organs of vision. Every one perceives the want of uniformity, and few detect the cause. Some suspect him of what farriers call a wall-eye; some think he squints. He himself talks familiarly of his two eyes, the black and the white, and used to liken them to those of our fine Persian cat, (now, alas! no more,) who had, in common with his feline countrymen, one blue as a sapphire, the other yellow as a topaz. The dissimilarity certainly rather spoils his beauty, but greatly improves his wit,—I mean the sense of his wit in others. It arrests attention and predisposes to laughter; is an outward and visible sign of the comical. No common man has two such eyes. They are made for fun.

In his occupations and pleasures Harry is pretty much like other provincial gentlemen; loves a rubber, and jests all through, at aces, kings, queens, and knaves, bad cards, and good, at winning and losing, scolding and praise;—loves a play, at which he out-talks the actors whilst on the stage,—to say nothing of the advantage he has over them in the intervals between the acts;—loves music, as a good accompaniment to his grand solo;—loves a contested election above all. That is his real element,—that din and uproar, and riot and confusion! To ride that whirlwind and direct that storm is his triumph of triumphs! He would make a great sensation in parliament himself, and a pleasant one. (By the way, he was once in danger of being turned out of the gallery for setting all around him in a roar.) Think what a fine thing it would be for the members to have mirth introduced into the body of the house! to be sure of an honest, hearty, good-humoured laugh during the session! Besides, Harry is an admirable speaker, in every sense of the word. Jesting is indeed his forte, because he wills it so to be; and therefore, because he chooses to play jigs and country dances upon a noble organ, even some of his stanchest admirers think he can play nothing else. There is no quality of which men so much grudge the reputation as versatility of talent. Because he is so humorous, they will hardly allow him to be eloquent; and, because he is so very witty, find it difficult to account him wise. But let him go where he has not that mischievous fame, or let him bridle his jests and rein in his humour only for one short hour, and he will pass for a most reverend orator,—logical, pathetic, and vigorous above all. But how can I wish him to cease jesting even for an hour? Who would exchange the genial fame of good-humoured wit for the stern reputation of wisdom? Who would choose to be Socrates, if with a wish he could be Harry L.?

MRS. MOSSE.

I do not know whether I ever hinted to the courteous reader that I had been in my younger days, without prejudice to my present condition, somewhat of a spoiled child. The person who, next after my father and mother, contributed most materially to this melancholy catastrophe, was an old female domestic, Mrs. Elizabeth Mosse, who, at the time of her death, had lived nearly sixty years in our house and that of my maternal grandfather. Of course, during the latter part of this long period, the common forms and feelings of servant and master were entirely swept away. She was a member of the family, an humble friend—happy are they who have such a friend! —living as she liked, up stairs or down, in the kitchen or the nursery, considered, consulted, and beloved by the whole household.

Mossy (for by that fondling nursery name she best liked to be called) had never been married, so that the family of her master and mistress had no rival in her heart, and on me, their only child, was concentrated that intensity of affection which distinguishes the attachments of age. I loved her dearly too, as dearly as a spoiled child can love its prime spoiler,—but, oh! how selfish was my love, compared to the depth, the purity, the indulgence, the self-denial of hers! Dear Mossy! I shall never do her justice; and yet I must try.

Mrs. Mosse, in her appearance, was in the highest degree what is called respectable. She must have been tall when young; for even when bent with age, she was above the middle height, a large-made though meagre woman. She walked with feebleness and difficulty, from the attacks of hereditary gout, which not even her temperance and activity could ward off. There was something very interesting in this tottering helplessness, clinging to the balusters, or holding by doors and chairs like a child. It had nothing of vulgar lameness; it told of age, venerable age. Out of doors she never ventured, unless on some sunny afternoon I could entice her into the air, and then once round the garden, or to the lawn gate and back again, was the extent of her walk, propped by a very aristocratic walking-stick (once the property of a duchess) as tall as herself, with a hooked ivory handle, joined to the cane by a rim of gold. Her face was as venerable as her person. She must have been very handsome; indeed she was so still, as far as regular and delicate features, a pale brown complexion, dark eyes, still retaining the intelligence and animation of youth, and an expression perfectly gentle and feminine, could make her so. It is one of the worst penalties that woman pays to age, that often, when advanced in life, the face loses its characteristic softness; in short, but for the difference in dress, many an old woman's head might pass for that of an old man. This misfortune could never have happened to Mossy. No one could mistake the sex of that sweet countenance.

Her dress manifested a good deal of laudable coquetry, a nice and minute attention to the becoming. I do not know at what precise date her costume was fixed: but, as long as I remember her fixed it was, and stood as invariably at one point of fashion, as the hand of an unwound clock stands at one hour of the day. It consisted (to begin from the feet and describe upwards) of black shoes of shining stuff, with very pointed toes, high heels, and a peak up the instep, showing to advantage her delicately white cotton stockings, and peeping beneath petticoats so numerous and substantial, as to give a rotundity and projection almost equal to a hoop. Her exterior garment was always quilted, varying according to the season or the occasion, from simple stuff, or fine white dimity, or an obsolete manufacture called Marseilles, up to silk and satin;—for, as the wardrobes of my three grandmothers (pshaw! I mean my grandfather's three wives!) had fallen to her lot, few gentlewomen of the last century could boast a greater variety of silks that stood on end.—Over the quilted petticoat came an open gown, whose long waist reached to the bottom of her stiff stays, and whose very full tail, about six inches longer than the petticoat, would have formed a very inconvenient little train, if it had been permitted to hang down; but that inconvenience never happened, and could scarcely have been contemplated by the designer. The tail was constantly looped up, so as to hang behind in a sort of bunchy festoon, exhibiting on each side the aforesaid petticoat. In material the gown also varied with the occasion, although it was always either composed of dark cotton or of the rich silks and satins of my grandmamma's wardrobe. The sleeves came down just below the elbow, and were finished by a narrow white ruffle meeting her neat mittens. On her neck she wore a snow white double muslin kerchief, pinned over the gown in front, and confined by an apron also of muslin; and, over all, a handsome silk shawl, so pinned back as to show a part of the snowy neck-kerchief. Her head-dress was equally becoming, and more particularly precise; for, if ever she betrayed an atom of old-maidishness, it was on the score of her caps. From a touch of the gout in her hands which had enlarged and stiffened the joints, she could do no work which required nicety, and the successive lady's maids, on whom the operation devolved, used to say that they would rather make up ten caps for their mistress than one for Mrs. Mosse; and yet the construction seemed simple enough. A fine clear-starched caul, sticking up rather high and peaked in front, was plaited on a Scotch gauze headpiece;

(I remember there used to be exactly six plaits on each side—woe to the damsel who should put more or less!) and, on the other side, a border, consisting of a strip of fine muslin, edged with narrow lace, clear-starched and crimped, was plaited on with equal precision. In one part of this millinery I used to assist. I dearly loved to crimp Mossy's frills, and she with her usual indulgence used frequently to let me, keeping however a pretty close eye on her laces and muslins, whilst I was passing them with triumphant rapidity between the small wooden machine notched longitudinally, and the corresponding roller. Perhaps a greater proof of indulgence could hardly have been shown, since she must, during this operation, have been in double fear for her own cap strips, which did occasionally get a rent, and for my fingers, which were sometimes well pinched—then she would threaten that I should never crimp her muslin again—a *never* which seldom lasted beyond the next cap-making. The head-piece was then concealed by a satin riband fastened in a peculiar bow, something between a bow and a puffing behind, whilst the front was adorned with an equally peculiar small knot, of which the two bows were pinned down flat and the two ends left sticking up, cut into scallops of a prodigious regularity. The purchase of the ribands formed another branch of the cap-making department to which I laid claim. From the earliest period at which I could distinguish one colour from another, I had been purveyor of ribands to Mossy, and indeed at all fairs, or whenever I received a present or entered a shop, (and I was so liberally supplied that there was nothing like generosity in the case,) it was the first and pleasantest destination of money that occurred to me: so that the dear woman used to complain, that Miss bought her so many ribands, that they spoiled in keeping. We did not quite agree either in our taste. White, as both acknowledged, was the only wear for Sundays and holidays; but then she loved plain white, and I could not always control a certain wandering inclination for figured patterns and pearl edges. If Mossy had an aversion to any thing, it was to a pearl edge. I never could persuade her to wear that simple piece of finery but once; and then she made as many wry faces as a child eating olives, and stood before a glass eyeing the obnoxious riband with so much discomposure, that I was fain to take it out myself, and promise to buy no more pearl edges. The every-day ribands were coloured; and there, too, we had our little differences of taste and opinion. Both agreed in the propriety of grave colours; but then my reading of a grave colour was not always the same as hers. My eyes were not old enough. She used to accuse my French greys of blueness, and my crimsons of redness, and my greens of their greenness. She had a *penchant* for brown, and to brown I had a repugnance only to be equalled by that which she professed towards a pearl edge;—indeed I retain my dislike to this hour;—it is such an exceedingly cross and frumpish-looking colour—and then its ugliness! Show me a brown flower! No! I could not bring myself to buy brown;—so after fighting many battles about grey and green, we at last settled on purple as a sort of neutral tint, a hue which pleased both parties. To return to the cap which we have been so long making—the finish both to that and to my description was a strip of crimped muslin, with edging on both sides to match the border, quilled on a piece of tape, and fastened on a cap at each ear. This she called the *chinnum*. A straight short row of hair rather grey, but still very dark for her age, just appeared under the plaited lace; and a pair of silver-mounted spectacles completed her equipment. If I live to the age of seventy, I will dress so too, with an exception of the stiff stays. Only a waist native to the fashion could endure that whalebone armour.

Her employments were many and various. No work was required of her from her mistress; but idleness was misery to her habits of active usefulness, and it was astonishing how much those crippled fingers could do. She preferred coarse needle-work, as it was least difficult to her eyes and hands; and she attended also to those numerous and undefined avocations of a gentleman's family which come under the denomination of odd jobs—shelling peas, paring apples, splitting French beans, washing china, darning stockings, hemming and mending dusters and house-cloths, making cabbage-nets, and knitting garters. These were her daily avocations, the amusements which she loved. The only more delicate operation of needle-work that she ever undertook was the making of pincushions, a manufacture in which she delighted—not the quips and quiddities of these degenerate days, little bits of riband, and pasteboard, and gilt paper, in the shape of books or butterflies, by which, at charitable repositories, half-a-dozen pins are smuggled into a lady's pocket, and shillings and half-crowns are smuggled out;—no! Mossy's were real solid old-fashioned silken pincushions, such as Autolycus might have carried about amongst his pedlery-ware, square and roomy, and capable, at a moderate computation, of containing a whole paper of *short-whites*, and another of *middlings*. It was delightful to observe her enjoyment of this play-work; the conscious importance with which she produced her satins and brocades, and her cards of sewing silks (she generally made a whole batch at once)—the deliberation with which she assorted the colours;—the care with which she tacked and fitted side to side, and corner to corner;—the earnestness with which, when all was sewed up except one small aperture for the insertion of the stuffing, she would pour in the bran, or stow in

the wool:—then the care with which she poked the stuffing into every separate corner, ramming it down with all her strength, and making the little bag (so to say) hold more than it would hold, until it became almost as hard as a cricket-ball;—then how she drew the aperture together by main force, putting so many last stitches, fastening off with such care;—and then distributing them to all around her (for her lady-like spirit would have scorned the idea of selling them), and always reserving the gayest and the prettiest for me. Dear old soul! I have several of them still.

But, if I should begin to enumerate all the instances of kindness which I experienced at her hands, through the changes and varieties of troublesome childhood and fantastic youth; from the time when I was a puling baby, to the still more exacting state of a young girl at home in the holidays, I should never know when to end. Her sweet and loving temper was self-rewarded. She enjoyed the happiness she gave. Those were pleasant evenings when my father and mother were engaged in the Christmas-dinner visits of a gay and extensive neighbourhood, and Mrs. Mosse used to put on her handsomest shawl and her kindest smile, and totter up stairs to drink tea with me, and keep me company. From those evenings I imbibed, in the first place, a love of strong green tea, for which gentlewomanly excitation Mossy had a remarkable predilection; secondly, a very discreditable and unladylike partiality, of which I am quite ashamed, which I keep a secret from my most intimate friends, and would not mention for the world—a sort of sneaking kindness for her favourite game of cribbage; an old-fashioned vulgarity, which, in my mind, beats the genteeler pastimes of whist and picquet, and every game, except quadrille, out and out. I make no exception in favour of chess, because, thanks to my stupidity, I never could learn that recondite diversion; moreover, judging from the grave faces and fatiguing silence of the initiated, I cannot help suspecting that, board for board, we cribbage-players are as well amused as they. Dear Mossy could neither feel to deal and shuffle, nor see to peg; so that the greater part of the business fell to my share. The success was pretty equally divided. Three rubbers were our stint; and we were often game and game in the last before victory declared itself. She was very anxious to beat, certainly—(N. B. we never played for any thing)—she liked to win; and yet she did not quite like that I should lose. If we could both have won—if it had been four-handed cribbage, and she my partner—still there would have been somebody to be beaten and pitied, but then that somebody would not have been "Miss."

The cribbage hour was pleasant; but I think the hours of chat which preceded and followed it were pleasanter still. Mossy was a most agreeable companion, sensible, modest, simple, shrewd, with an exactness of recollection, an honesty of memory, that gave exceeding interest to her stories. You were sure that you heard the truth. There was one striking peculiarity in her manner of talking, or rather one striking contrast. The voice and accent were quite those of a gentlewoman, as sweet-toned and correct as could be; the words and their arrangement were altogether those of a common person, provincial and ungrammatical in every phrase and combination. I believe it is an effect of association, from the little slips in her grammar, that I have contracted a most unscholar-like prejudice in favour of false syntax, which is so connected in my mind with right notions, that I no sooner catch the sound of bad English than I begin to listen for good sense; and really they often go together (always supposing that the bad English be not of the order called slang), and meet much more frequently than those exclusive people, ladies and gentlemen, are willing to allow. In her they were always united. But the charm of her conversation was in the old family stories, and the unconscious peeps at old manners which they afforded.

My grandfather, with whom she had lived in his first wife's time, full twenty years before my mother's birth, was a most respectable clergyman, who, after passing a few years in London amongst the wits and poets of the day, seeing the star of Pope in its decline, and that of Johnson in its rise, had retired into the country, where he held two adjoining livings of considerable value, both of which he served for above forty years, until the duty becoming too severe, he resigned one of them under an old-fashioned notion, that he who did the duty ought to receive the remuneration. I am very proud of my venerable ancestor. We have a portrait of him taken shortly after he was ordained, in his gown and band, with a curious flowing wig, something like that of a judge, fashionable doubtless, at the time, but which at present rather discomposes one's notions of clerical costume. He seems to have been a dark little man, with a sensible countenance, and a pair of black eyes, that even in the picture look you through. He was a votary of the Muses, too; a contributor to Lewis's Miscellany; (did my readers ever hear of that collection?) translated Horace, as all gentlemen do; and wrote love-verses, which had the unusual good fortune of obtaining their object, being, as Mrs. Mosse was wont to affirm, the chief engine and implement by which at fifty he gained the heart of his third wife, my real grandmamma, the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring 'squire. Of Dr. R., his wives, and his sermons, the bishops who visited, and the poets who wrote to him, Mossy's talk was mainly composed; chiefly of the wives.

Mrs. R., the first, was a fine London lady,

a widow, and considerably older than her spouse, inasmuch as my grandpapa's passion for her commenced when he and her son, by a former husband, were school-fellows at Westminster. Mrs. Mosse never talked much of her, and, I suspect, did not much like her, though, when closely questioned, she would say that madam was a fine, portly lady, stately and personable, but rather too high. Her son made a sad *mesalliance*. He ran away with the sexton's daughter, an adventure which cost the sexton his post, and his mother her pride: she never looked up after it. That disgrace, and a cold caught by bumping on a pillion six miles through the rain, sent her to her grave.

Of the second Mrs. R. little remains on record, except a gown and petticoat of primrose silk, curiously embossed and embroidered with gold and silver thread and silks of all colours, in an enormous running pattern of staring flowers, wonderfully unlike nature; also various recipes in the family receipt-book, which show a delicate Italian hand, and a bold originality of orthography. The chief event of her married life appears to have been the small-pox. She and two of her sisters, and Mrs. Mosse, were all inoculated together. The other servants, who had not gone through the disorder, were sent out of the house: Dr. R. himself took refuge with a neighbouring friend, and the patients were consigned to the care of two or three nurses, gossips by profession, hired from the next town. The best parlour, (in those days drawing-rooms were not,) was turned into a hospital; a quarantine, almost as strict as would be required in the plague, was kept up, and the preparation, the disease, and the recovery, consumed nearly two months. Mrs. Mosse always spoke of it as one of the pleasantest passages of her life. None of them suffered much; there was nothing to do, plenty of gossiping; a sense of self-importance, such as all prisoners must feel more or less; and for amusement they had Pamela, the Spectator, and Sir Charles Grandison. My grandfather had a very fine library; but Sir Charles was a female book, having been purchased by the joint contributions of six young ladies, and circulated amongst them once a year, sojourning two months with each fair partner, till death or marriage broke up the *coterie*. Is not that fame? Well, the second Mrs. R. died in the course of time, though not of the small-pox; and my grandfather, faithful to his wives, but not to their memories, married again as usual.

His third adventure in that line was particularly happy; for my grandmother, beside being a celebrated beauty, appears to have been one of the best and kindest women that ever gladdened a country-home. She had a large household; for the tithes of one rich rectory were taken in kind, and the glebe cultivated; so that the cares of a farm-house were added to the hospitality of a man of good fortune, and to the sort of stateliness which in those primitive days appertained to a doctor of divinity. The superintendence of that large household seems to have been at once her duty and her delight. It was a plenty and festivity almost resembling that of Camacho's wedding, guided by a wise and liberal economy, and a spirit of indefatigable industry. Oh the saltings, the picklings, the preservings, the cake-makings, the unnamed and unnameable confectionary doings over which she presided! The very titles of her territories denoted the extent of her stores. The apple-room, the pear-bin, the cheese-loft, the minced-meat closet, were household words as familiar in Mossy's mouth as the dairy or the poultry-yard. And my grandmamma was no hoarder for hoarding's sake, no maker of good things which were not to be eaten—as I have sometimes noted amongst your managing ladies; the object of her cares and stores was to contribute to the comfort of all who came within her influence. The large parsonage-house was generally overflowing with guests; and from the Oxford professor, who, with his wife, children, servants, and horses, passed his vacations there, to the poor pew-opener, who came with her little ones at tide-times, all felt the charm of her smiling graciousness, her sweet and cheerful spirit, her open hand and open heart. It is difficult to imagine a happier couple than my venerable grandfather and his charming wife. He retained to the last his studious habits, his love of literature, and his strong and warm family affections; while she cast the sunshine of her innocent gaiety over his respectable age, proud of his scholarship, and prouder still of his virtues. Both died long ago. But Mossy was an "honest chronicler," and never weary of her theme. Even the daily airings of the good doctor (who, in spite of his three wives, had a little of the peculiar preciseness in his studies and his exercise, which one is apt to attribute exclusively to that dreary person, an old bachelor) even those airings from twelve to two, four miles on the turnpike-road, and four miles back, with the fat horses and the grey-haired coachman, became vivid and characteristic in her description. The very carriage-dog, Sancho, was individualized; we felt that he belonged to the people and the time.

Of these things we talked, mingled with many miscellaneous anecdotes of the same date;—how an electioneering duke saluted madam, and lost master's interest by the freedom;—how Sir Thomas S., the Lovelace of his day, came in his chariot and six, full twenty miles out of his way, to show himself to Miss Fanny in a Spanish masquerade dress, white satin slashed with blue, a blue cloak embroidered with silver, and point-lace that might have won any woman's heart, except that of his fair but obdurate mistress; and lastly,

how Henry Fielding, when on a visit in the neighbourhood, had been accustomed to come and swing the children in the great barn; he had even swung Mossy herself, to her no small edification and delight—only think of being chucked backwards and forwards by the man who wrote about Parson Adams and 'Squire Allworthy! I used to envy her that felicity. Then from authors we got to books. She could not see in my time to read any thing but the folio Bible, and Common Prayer-Book, with which my dear mother had furnished her; but in her younger days she had seen or heard parts at least of a variety of books, and entered into them with a very keen though uncritical relish. Her chief favourites were, the Pilgrim's Progress, Don Quixote, Gulliver's Travels, Robinson Crusoe, and the equally apocryphal but still truer-seeming History of the Plague in London, by the same author, all of which she believed with the most earnest simplicity. I used frequently to read to her the passages she liked best; and she in her turn would repeat to me songs and ballads, good, bad, and indifferent—a strange medley, and strangely confounded in her memory; and so the time passed till ten o'clock. Those were pleasant evenings for her and for me.

I have sometimes, on recollection, feared that her down-stair life was less happy. All that the orders of a mistress could effect for her comfort was done. But we were rich then unluckily; and there were skipjacks of footmen, and surly coachmen, and affected waiting-maids, and vixenish cooks, with tempers red-hot like their coals, to vex and tease our dear old woman. She must have suffered greatly between her ardent zeal for her master's interest, and that strange principle of concealing evil doings which servants call honour, and of which she was perpetually the slave and the victim. She had another infirmity, too, an impossibility of saying no, which, added to an unbounded generosity of temper, rendered her the easy dupe of the artful and designing. She would give any thing to the appearance of want, or the pretence of affection; in short, to importunity, however clothed. It was the only point of weakness in her character; and to watch that she did not throw away her own little comforts, to protect her from the effects of her over-liberality, was the chief care of her mistress. Three inferior servants were successively turned away for trespassing on Mossy's goodness, drinking her green tea, eating her diet-bread, begging her gowns. But the evil was incurable; she could dispense with any pleasure, except that of giving. So she lived on, beloved as the kind, the gentle, and the generous must be, till I left school, an event that gave her great satisfaction.

We passed the succeeding spring in London; and she took the opportunity to pay a long-promised visit to a half-nephew and niece, or rather a half-niece and her husband, who lived in Prince's-street, Barbican. Mrs. Beck (one naturally mentions her first as the person of most consequence) was the only real woman who ever came up to the magnificent abstract idea of the "fat woman of Brentford," the only being for whom Sir John Falstaff might have passed undetected. She was indeed a mountain of flesh, exuberant, rubicund, and bearded like a man; and she spoke, in a loud deep mannish voice, a broad Wiltshire dialect; but she was hearty and jovial withal, a thorough good fellow in petticoats. Mr. Beck, on the other hand, was a little insignificant, perking, sharp-featured man, with a Jerry-Sneak expression in his pale whey-face, a thin squeaking voice, and a Cockney accent. He had been lucky enough to keep a little shop in an independent borough, at the time of a violently contested election; and having adroitly kept back his vote till votes rose to their full value (I hope this is no breach of privilege,) and then voted on the strongest side, he was at the time of which I speak comfortably settled in the excise as a tide-waiter, had a pretty neat house, brought up his family in good repute, wore a flaming red waistcoat, attended a dissenting meeting, and owed no man a shilling.

These good people were very fond of their aunt, who had indeed, before they were so well off, shown them innumerable kindnesses. Perhaps there might be in the case a little gratitude for favours to come; for she had three or four hundred pounds to bequeath, partly her own savings, and partly a legacy from a distant relative; and they were her natural heirs. However that might be, they paid her all possible attention, and when we were about to return into the country, petitioned so vehemently for a few weeks more, that, yielding to the above-mentioned infirmity, she consented to stay. I had myself been the ambassadress to Barbican to fetch our dear old friend; and I remember, as if it were yesterday, how earnestly I entreated her to come with me, and how seriously I lectured Mrs. Beck for her selfishness, in wishing to keep her aunt in London during the heat of June. I even, after taking leave, sprang out of the carriage and ran up stairs to persuade her to come with me. Mossy's wishes were evidently on my side; but she had promised, and the performance of her promise was peremptorily claimed: so with a heavy heart I left her. I never saw her again. There is surely such a thing as presentiment. A violent attack of gout in the stomach carried her off in a few hours. Hail to thy memory! for thou wast of the antique world, when "service sweat for duty, not for meed!"

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

NUTTING.

September 26th.—One of those delicious autumnal days, when the air, the sky, and the earth, seem lulled into an universal calm, softer and milder even than May. We sallied forth for a walk, in a mood congenial to the weather and the season, avoiding, by mutual consent, the bright and sunny common, and the gay high road, and stealing through shady unfrequented lanes, where we were not likely to meet any one,—not even the pretty family procession, which in other years we used to contemplate with so much interest—the father, mother, and children, returning from the wheat field, the little ones laden with bristling close-tied bunches of wheat-ears, their own gleanings, or a bottle and a basket which had contained their frugal dinner, whilst the mother would carry her babe hushing and lulling it, and the father and an elder child trudged after with the cradle, all seeming weary, and all happy. We shall not see such a procession as this to-day; for the harvest is nearly over, the fields are deserted, the silence may almost be felt. Except the wintry notes of the redbreast, nature herself is mute. But how beautiful, how gentle, how harmonious, how rich! The rain has preserved to the herbage all the freshness and verdure of spring, and the world of leaves has lost nothing of its midsummer brightness, and the harebell is on the banks and the woodbine in the hedges, and the low furze, which the lambs cropped in the spring, has burst again into its golden blossoms.

All is beautiful that the eye can see; perhaps the more beautiful for being shut in with a forest-like closeness. We have no prospect in this labyrinth of lanes, cross-roads, mere cart-ways, leading to the innumerable little farms into which this part of the parish is divided. Uphill or down, these quiet woody lanes scarcely give us a peep at the world, except when, leaning over a gate, we look into one of the small enclosures, hemmed in with hedgerows, so closely set with growing timber, that the meady opening looks almost like a glade in a wood, or when some cottage, planted at a corner of one of the little greens formed by the meeting of these cross-ways, almost startles us by the unexpected sight of the dwellings of men in such a solitude. But that we have more of hill and dale, and that our cross-roads are excellent in their kind, this side of our parish would resemble the description given of La Vendée, in Madame Larochejacquelin's most interesting book.* I am sure if wood can entitle a country to be called Le Bocage, none can have a better right to the name. Even this pretty snug farm-house on the hill-side, with its front covered with the rich vine, which goes wreathing up to the very top of the clustered chimney, and its sloping orchard full of fruit—even this pretty quiet nest can hardly peep out of its leaves. Ah! they are gathering in the orchard harvest. Look at that young rogue in the old mossy apple-tree—that great tree, bending with the weight of its golden rennets—see how he pelts his little sister beneath with apples as red and as round as her own cheeks, while she, with her outstretched frock, is trying to catch them, and laughing and offering to pelt again as often as one bobs against her; and look at that still younger imp, who, as grave as a judge, is creeping on hands and knees under the tree, picking up the apples as they fall so deedily,† and depositing them so honestly in the great basket on the grass, already fixed so firmly and opened so widely, and filled almost to overflowing by the brown rough fruitage of the golden-rennet's next neighbour the russeting; and see that smallest urchin of all seated apart in infantine state on the turfy bank, with that toothsome piece of deformity a crumpling in each hand, now biting from one sweet hard juicy morsel, and now from another.—Is not that a pretty English picture? And then, farther up the orchard, that bold hardy lad, the eldest-born, who has scaled (Heaven knows how!) the tall straight upper branch of that great pear-tree, and is sitting there as securely and as fearlessly, in as much real safety and apparent danger, as a sailor on the top-mast. Now he shakes the tree with a mighty swing that brings down a pelting shower of stony bergamots, which the father gathers rapidly up, whilst the mother can hardly assist for her motherly fear,—a fear which only spurs the spirited boy to bolder ventures. Is not that a pretty picture? And they are such a handsome family, too, the Brookers. I do not know that there is any gipsy blood, but there is the true gipsy complexion, richly brown, with cheeks and lips so deeply red, black hair curling close to their heads in short crisp rings, white shining teeth—and such eyes!—That sort of beauty entirely eclipses your mere roses and lilies. Even Lizzy, the prettiest of fair children, would look poor and watery by the side of Willy Brooker, the sober little personage who is picking up the apples with his small chubby hands, and filling the basket so orderly, next to his father the most useful man in the field. "Willy!" he hears without see-

* An almost equally interesting account of that very peculiar and interesting scenery, may be found in "The Maid of La Vendée," an English novel, remarkable for its simplicity and truth of painting, written by Mrs. Le Noir, the daughter of Christopher Smart, and inheritrix of much of his talent. Her works deserve to be better known.

† "Deedily,"—I am not quite sure that this word is good English; but it is genuine Hampshire, and is used by the most correct of female writers, Miss Austen. It means (and it is no small merit that it has no exact synonyme) any thing done with a profound and plodding attention, an action which engrosses all the powers of mind and body.

ing; for we are quite hidden by the high bank, and a spreading hawthorn-bush that overtops it, though between the lower branches and the grass we have found a convenient peep-hole. "Willy!" The voice sounds to him like some fairy dream, and the black eyes are raised from the ground with sudden wonder, the long silky eye-lashes thrown back till they rest on the delicate brow, and a deeper blush is burning in those dark cheeks, and a smile is dimpling about those scarlet lips. But the voice is silent now, and the little quiet boy, after a moment's pause, is gone coolly to work again. He is indeed a most lovely child. I think some day or other he must marry Lizzy; I shall propose the match to their respective mammas. At present the parties are rather too young for a wedding—the intended bridegroom being, as I should judge, six, or thereabout, and the fair bride barely five,—but at least we might have a betrothment after the royal fashion,—there could be no harm in that. Miss Lizzy, I have no doubt, would be as demure and coquettish as if ten winters more had gone over her head, and poor Willy would open his innocent black eyes, and wonder what was going forward. They would be the very Oberon and Titania of the village, the fairy king and queen.

Ah! here is the hedge along which the periwinkle wreathes and twines so profusely, with its evergreen leaves shining like the myrtle, and its starry blue flowers. It is seldom found wild in this part of England; but, when we do meet with it, it is so abundant and so welcome,—the very robin-red-breast of flowers, a winter friend. Unless in those unfrequent frosts which destroy all vegetation, it blossoms from September to June, surviving the last lingering crane's-bill, forerunning the earliest primrose, hardier even than the mountain daisy,—peeping out from beneath the snow, looking at itself in the ice, smiling through the tempests of life, and yet welcoming and enjoying the sunbeams. Oh, to be like that flower!

The little spring that has been bubbling under the hedge all along the hill side, begins, now that we have mounted the eminence and are imperceptibly descending, to deviate into a capricious variety of clear deep pools and channels, so narrow and so choked with weeds, that a child might overstep them. The hedge has also changed its character. It is no longer the close compact vegetable wall of hawthorn and maple, and briar roses, intertwined with bramble and woodbine, and crowned with large elms or thickly set saplings. No! the pretty meadow which rises high above us, backed and almost surrounded by a tall coppice, needs no defence on our side but its own steep bank, garnished with tufts of broom, with pollard oaks wreathed with ivy, and here and there with long patches of hazel overhanging the water. "Ah there are still nuts on that bough!" and in an instant my dear companion, active and eager and delighted as a boy, has hooked down with his walking-stick one of the lissome hazel stalks, and cleared it of its tawny clusters, and in another moment he has mounted the bank, and is in the midst of the nuttery, now transferring the spoil from the lower branches into that vast variety of pockets which gentlemen carry about them, now bending the tall tops into the lane, holding them down by main force, so that I might reach them and enjoy the pleasure of collecting some of the plunder myself. A very great pleasure he knew it would be. I doffed my shawl, tucked up my flounces, turned my straw bonnet into a basket, and began gathering and scrambling—for manage it how you may, nutting is scrambling work,—those boughs, however tightly you may grasp them by the young fragrant twigs and the bright green leaves, will recoil and burst away; but there is a pleasure even in that: so on we go, scrambling and gathering with all our might and all our glee. Oh what an enjoyment! All my life long I have had a passion for that sort of seeking which implies finding, (the secret, I believe, of the love of field-sports, which is in man's mind a natural impulse,)—therefore I love violeting,—therefore, when we had a fine garden I used to love to gather strawberries, and cut asparagus, and, above all, to collect the filberts from the shrubberies: but this hedge-row nutting beats that sport all to nothing. That was a make-believe thing compared with this; there was no surprise, no suspense, no unexpectedness—it was as inferior to this wildnutting, as the turning out of a bag fox is to unearthing the fellow in the eyes of a staunch foxhunter.

Oh what an enjoyment this nut-gathering is!—They are in such abundance, that it seems as if there were not a boy in the parish, nor a young man nor a young woman,—for a basket of nuts is the universal tribute of country gallantry; our pretty damsel Harriet has had at least half a dozen this season; but no one has found out these. And they are so full too, we lose half of them from over-ripeness; they drop from the socket at the slightest motion. If we lose, there is one who finds.—May is as fond of nuts as a squirrel, and cracks the shell and extracts the kernel with equal dexterity. Her white glossy head is upturned now to watch them as they fall. See how her neck is thrown back like that of a swan, and how beautifully her folded ears quiver with expectation, and how her quick eye follows the rustling noise, and her light feet dance and pat the ground, and leap up with eagerness, seeming almost sustained in the air, just as I have seen her when Brush is beating a hedge-row, and she knows from his questing that there is a hare afoot. See, she has caught that nut just before it touched the water; but

the water would have been no defence,—she fishes them from the bottom, she delves after them amongst the matted grass—even my bonnet—how beggingly she looks at that! "Oh what a pleasure nutting is!—Is it not, May? But the pockets are almost full, and so is the basket-bonnet, and that bright watch the sun says it is late; and after all it is wrong to rob the poor boys—is it not, May?" May shakes her graceful head denyingly, as if she understood the question.—"And we must go home now—must we not? But we will come nutting again some time or other—shall we not, my May?"

AUNT MARTHA.

One of the pleasantest habitations I have ever known, is an old white house, built at right angles, with the pointed roofs and clustered chimneys of Elizabeth's day, covered with roses, vines, and passion-flowers, and parted by a green sloping meadow from a straggling picturesque village street. In this charming abode resides a more charming family: a gentleman,

> "Polite as all his life in courts had been,
> And good as he the world had never seen;"

two daughters full of sweetness and talent; and aunt Martha—the most delightful of old maids! She has another appellation I suppose,—she must have one;—but I scarcely know it: Aunt Martha is the name that belongs to her—the name of affection. Such is the universal feeling which she inspires, that all her friends, all her acquaintances, (in this case the terms are almost synonymous,) speak of her like her own family:—she is every body's Aunt Martha—and a very charming Aunt Martha she is.

First of all, she is, as all women should be if they can, remarkably handsome. She may be—it is a delicate matter to speak of a lady's age!—she must be five-and-forty; but few beauties of twenty could stand a comparison with her loveliness. It is such a fulness of bloom, so luxuriant, so satiating; just tall enough to carry off the plumpness which at forty-five is so becoming; a brilliant complexion; curled pouting lips! long, clear, bright grey eyes—the colour for expression, that which unites the quickness of the black with the softness of the blue; a Roman regularity of feature; and a profusion of rich brown hair.—Such is Aunt Martha. Add to this a very gentle and pleasant speech, always kind, and generally lively; the sweetest temper; the easiest manners; a singular rectitude and singleness of mind; a perfect open-heartedness; and a total unconsciousness of all these charms; and you will wonder a little that she is Aunt Martha still. I have heard hints of an early engagement broken by the fickleness of man;—and there is about her an aversion to love in one particular direction—the love matrimonial—and an overflowing of affection in all other channels, that it seems as if the natural course of the stream had been violently dammed up. She has many lovers—admirers I should say,—for there is, amidst her good-humoured gaiety, a coyness that forbids their going farther; a modesty almost amounting to shyness, that checks even the laughing girls, who sometimes accuse her of stealing away their beaux. I do not think any man on earth could tempt her into wedlock; it would be a most unpardonable monopoly if any one should; an intolerable engrossing of a general blessing; a theft from the whole community.

Her usual home is the white house covered with roses; and her station in the family is rather doubtful. She is not the mistress, for her charming nieces are old enough to take and to adorn the head of the table; nor the house-keeper, though, as she is the only lady of the establishment who wears pockets, those ensigns of authority, the keys, will sometimes be found, with other strays, in that goodly receptacle: nor a guest; her spirit is too active for that lazy post; her real vocation there, and every where, seems to be comforting, cheering, welcoming, and spoiling every thing that comes in her way; and, above all, nursing and taking care. Of all kind employments, these are her favourites. Oh the shawlings, the cloakings, the cloggings! the cautions against cold, or heat, or rain, or sun! the remedies for diseases not arrived! colds uncaught! incipient tooth-aches! rheumatisms to come! She loves nursing so well, that we used to accuse her of inventing maladies for other people, that she might have the pleasure of curing them; and when they really come—as come they will sometimes in spite of Aunt Martha—what a nurse she is! It is worth while to be a little sick to be so attended. All the cousins, and cousins' cousins of her connection, as regularly send for her on the occasion of a lying-in, as for the midwife. I suppose she has undergone the ceremony of dandling the baby, sitting up with the new mamma, and dispensing the caudle, twenty times at least. She is equally important at weddings or funerals. Her humanity is inexhaustible. She has an intense feeling of fellowship with her kind, and grieves or rejoices in the sufferings or happiness of others with a reality as genuine as it is rare.

Her accomplishments are exactly of this sympathetic order; all calculated to administer much to the pleasure of her companions, nothing to her own importance or vanity. She leaves to the sirens, her nieces, the higher enchantments of the piano, the harp, and the guitar, and that noblest of instruments, the

human voice; ambitious of no other musical fame than such as belongs to the playing of quadrilles and waltzes for their little dances, in which she is indefatigable: she neither caricatures the face of man nor of nature under pretence of drawing figures or landscapes; but she ornaments the reticules, bell-ropes, ottomans, and chair-covers of all her acquaintance, with flowers as rich and luxuriant as her own beauty. She draws patterns for the ignorant, and works flounces, frills, and baby-linen, for the idle; she reads aloud to the sick, plays at cards with the old, and loses at chess to the unhappy. Her gift in gossiping, too, is extraordinary; she is a gentle newsmonger, and turns her scandal on the sunny side. But she is an old maid still; and certain small peculiarities hang about her. She is a thorough hoarder; whatever fashion comes up, she is sure to have something of the sort by her—or, at least, something thereunto convertible. She is a little superstitious; sees strangers in her tea-cup, gifts in her finger-nails, letters and winding-sheets in the candle, and purses and coffins in the fire; would not spill the salt "for all the worlds that one ever has to give;" and looks with dismay on a crossed knife and fork. Moreover, she is orderly to fidgetiness; —that is her greatest calamity!—for young ladies now-a-days are not quite so tidy as they should be,—and ladies' maids are much worse; and drawers are tumbled, and drawing-rooms in a litter. Happy she to whom a disarranged drawer can be a misery! Dear and happy Aunt Martha!

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE VISIT.

October 27th.—A lovely autumnal day; the air soft, balmy, genial; the sky of that softened and delicate blue upon which the eye loves to rest,—the blue which gives such relief to the rich beauty of the earth, all around glowing in the ripe and mellow tints of the most gorgeous of the seasons. Really such an autumn may well compensate our English climate for the fine spring of the south, that spring of which the poets talk, but which we so seldom enjoy. Such an autumn glows upon us like a splendid evening; it is the very sunset of the year: and I have been tempted forth into a wider range of enjoyment than usual. This *walk* (if I may use the Irish figure of speech called a bull) will be a *ride*. A very dear friend has beguiled me into accompanying her in her pretty equipage to her beautiful home, four miles off; and having sent forward in the style of a running footman the servant who had driven her, she assumes the reins, and off we set.

My fair companion is a person whom nature and fortune would have spoiled if they could. She is one of those striking women whom a stranger cannot pass without turning to look again: tall and finely proportioned, with a bold Roman contour of figure and feature, a delicate English complexion, and an air of distinction altogether her own. Her beauty is duchess-like. She seems born to wear feathers and diamonds, and to form the grace and ornament of a court; and the noble frankness and simplicity of her countenance and manner confirm the impression. Destiny has however dealt more kindly by her. She is the wife of a rich country gentleman of high descent and higher attainments, to whom she is most devotedly attached,—the mother of a fine little girl as lovely as herself, and the delight of all who have the happiness of her acquaintance, to whom she is endeared not merely by her remarkable sweetness of temper and kindness of heart, but by the singular ingenuousness and openness of character which communicate an indescribable charm to her conversation. She is as transparent as water. You may see every colour, every shade of a mind as lofty and beautiful as her person. Talking with her is like being in the Palace of Truth, described by Madame de Genlis; and yet so kindly are her feelings, so great the indulgence to the little failings and foibles of our common nature, so intense her sympathy with the wants, the wishes, the sorrows, and the happiness of her fellow-creatures, that with all her frank-speaking, I never knew her to make an enemy or lose a friend.

But we must get on. What would she say if she knew I was putting her into print? We must get on up the hill. Ah! that is precisely what we are not likely to do! This horse, this beautiful and high-bred horse, well fed, and fat and glossy, who stood prancing at our gate like an Arabian, has suddenly turned sulky. He does not indeed stand quite still, but his way of moving is little better—the slowest and most sullen of all walks. Even they who ply the hearse at funerals, sad-looking beasts, who totter under black feathers, go faster. It is of no use to admonish him by whip or rein, or word. The rogue has found out that it is a weak and tender hand that guides him now. Oh for one pull, one stroke of his old driver, the groom! How he would fly! But there is the groom half-a-mile before us, out of ear-shot, clearing the ground at a capital rate, beating us hollow. He has just turned the top of the hill;—and in a moment—ay, *now* he is out of sight, and will undoubtedly so continue till he meets us at the lawn gate. Well! there is no great harm. It is only prolonging the pleasure of enjoying together this charming scenery in this fine weather. If once we make up our minds not to care how slowly our steed goes, not to fret ourselves by vain exertions, it is no matter what his pace may be. There is little doubt of his getting home by sunset,

and that will content us. He is, after all, a fine noble animal; and perhaps when he finds that we are determined to give him his way, he may relent and give us ours. All his sex are sticklers for dominion, though when it is undisputed, some of them are generous enough to abandon it. Two or three of the most discreet wives of my acquaintance contrive to manage their husbands sufficiently with no better secret than this seeming submission; and in our case the example has the more weight since we have no possible way of helping ourselves.

Thus philosophising, we reached the top of the hill, and viewed with "reverted eyes" the beautiful prospect that lay bathed in golden sunshine behind us. Cowper says, with that boldness of expressing in poetry the commonest and simplest feelings, which is perhaps one great secret of his originality,

> "Scenes must be beautiful, which, daily seen,
> Please daily, and whose novelty survives
> Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years."

Every day I walk up this hill—every day I pause at the top to admire the broad winding road with the green waste on each side, uniting it with the thickly timbered hedgerows; the two pretty cottages at unequal distances, placed so as to mark the bends; the village beyond, with its mass of roofs and clustered chimneys peeping through the trees; and the rich distance, where cottages, mansions, churches, towns, seem embowered in some wide forest, and shut in by blue shadowy hills. Every day I admire this most beautiful landscape; yet never did it seem to me so fine or so glowing as now. All the tints of the glorious autumn, orange, tawny, yellow, red, are poured in profusion amongst the bright greens of the meadows and turnip fields, till the eye is satiated with colour; and then before us we have the common with its picturesque roughness of surface, tufted with cottages, dappled with water, edging off on one side into fields and farms and orchards, and terminated on the other by the princely oak avenue. What a richness and variety the wild broken ground gives to the luxuriant cultivation of the rest of the landscape! Cowper has described it for me. How perpetually, as we walk in the country, his vivid pictures recur to the memory! Here is his common and mine!

> "The common overgrown with fern, and rough
> With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deform'd
> And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
> And decks itself with ornaments of gold;—
> ——————————— there the turf
> Smells fresh, and, rich in odoriferous herbs
> And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
> With luxury of unexpected sweets."

The description is exact. There, too, to the left is my cricket-ground; (Cowper's common wanted that finishing grace;) and there stands one solitary urchin, as if in contemplation of its past and future glories; for, alas! cricket is over for the season. Ah! it is Ben Kirby, next brother to Joe, king of the youngsters, and probably his successor—for this Michaelmas has cost us Joe. He is promoted from the farm to the mansion-house, two miles off: there he cleans shoes, rubs knives, and runs upon errands, and is, as his mother expresses it, "a sort of 'prentice to the footman."—I should not wonder if Joe, some day or other, should overtop the footman, and rise to be butler; and his splendid prospects must be our consolation for the loss of this great favourite. In the mean time we have Ben.

Ben Kirby is a year younger than Joe, and the schoolfellow and rival of Jem Eusden. To be sure his abilities lie in rather a different line: Jem is a scholar; Ben is a wag: Jem is great in figures and writing; Ben in faces and mischief. His master says of him, that, if there were two such in the school, he must resign his office: and, as far as my observation goes, the worthy pedagogue is right. Ben is, it must be confessed, a great corrupter of gravity. He hath an exceeding aversion to authority and decorum, and a wonderful boldness and dexterity in overthrowing the one and puzzling the other. His contortions of visage are astounding. His "power over his own muscles and those of other people," is almost equal to that of Liston: and indeed the original face, flat and square and Chinese in its shape, of a fine tan complexion, with a snub nose, and a slit for a mouth, is nearly as comical as that matchless performer's. When aided by Ben's singular mobility of feature, his knowing winks and grins and shrugs and nods, together with a certain dry shrewdness, a habit of saying sharp things, and a marvelous gift of impudence, it forms as fine a specimen as possible of a humorous country boy, an oddity in embryo. Every body likes Ben, except his butts; (which may comprise half his acquaintance;) and of them no one so thoroughly hates and dreads him as our parish school-master, a most worthy King Log, whom Ben dumfounds twenty times a day. He is a great ornament of the cricket-ground, has a real genius for the game, and displays it after a very original manner, under the disguise of awkwardness—as the clown shows off his agility in a pantomime. Nothing comes amiss to him.—By the by, he would have been the very lad for us in our present dilemma; not a horse in England could master Ben Kirby. But we are too far from him now—and perhaps it is as well that we are so. I believe that the rogue has a kindness for me in remembrance of certain apples and nuts, which my usual companion, who delights in his wit, is accustomed to dole out to him. But it is a Robin Goodfellow, nevertheless, a perfect Puck that loves nothing on earth so well as mischief. Perhaps the horse may be the safer conductor of the two.

The avenue is quite alive to-day. Old women are picking up twigs and acorns, and pigs of all sizes doing their utmost to spare them the latter part of the trouble; boys and girls groping for beech-nuts under yonder clump; and a group of young elves collecting as many dead leaves as they can find to feed the bonfire which is smoking away so briskly amongst the trees,—a sort of rehearsal of the grand bonfire nine days hence; of the loyal conflagration of the arch traitor Guy Fawkes, which is annually solemnized in the avenue, accompanied by as much squibbery and crackery as our boys can beg or borrow—not to say steal. Ben Kirby is a great man on the 5th of November. All the savings of a month, the hoarded halfpence, the new farthings, the very luck-penny go off *in fumo* on that night. For my part, I like this daylight mockery better. There is no gunpowder—odious gunpowder! no noise but the merry shouts of the small fry, so shrill and happy, and the cawing of the rooks who are wheeling in large circles overhead, and wondering what is going forward in their territory—seeming in their loud clamour to ask what that light smoke may mean that curls so prettily amongst their old oaks, towering as if to meet the clouds. There is something very intelligent in the ways of that black people the rooks, particularly in their wonder. I suppose it results from their numbers and unity of purpose, a sort of collective and corporate wisdom. Yet geese congregate also; and geese never by any chance look wise. But then geese are a domestic fowl; we have spoiled them; and rooks are free commoners of nature, who use the habitations we provide for them, tenant our groves and our avenues, and never dream of becoming our subjects.

What a labyrinth of a road this is! I do think there are four turnings in the short half-mile between the avenue and the mill. And what a pity, as my companion observes—not that our good and jolly miller, the very representative of the old English yeomanry, should be so rich, but that one consequence of his riches should be the pulling down of the prettiest old mill that ever looked at itself in the Loddon, with the picturesque low-browed irregular cottage, which stood with its light-pointed roof, its clustered chimneys, and its ever-open door, looking like the real abode of comfort and hospitality, to build this huge, staring, frightful, red-brick mill, as ugly as a manufactory, and this great square house, ugly and red to match, just behind. The old buildings always used to remind me of Wollett's beautiful engraving of a scene in the Maid of the Mill. It will be long before any artist will make a drawing of this. Only think of this redness in a picture! this boiled lobster of a house! Falstaff's description of Bardolph's nose would look pale in the comparison.

Here is that monstrous machine of a tilted wagon, with its load of flour, and its four fat horses. I wonder whether our horse will have the decency to get out of the way. If he does not, I am sure we cannot make him; and that enormous ship upon wheels, that ark on dry land, would roll over us like the car of Juggernaut. Really—Oh no! there is no danger now. I should have remembered that it is my friend Samuel Long who drives the mill-team. He will take care of us. "Thank you, Samuel!" And Samuel has put us on our way, steered us safely past his wagon, escorted us over the bridge; and now, having seen us through our immediate difficulties, has parted from us with a very civil bow and good-humoured smile, as one who is always civil and good-humoured, but with a certain triumphant masterful look in his eyes, which I have noted in men, even the best of them, when a woman gets into straits by attempting manly employments. He has done us great good though, and may be allowed his little feeling of superiority. The parting salute he bestowed on our steed, in the shape of an astounding crack of his huge whip, has put that refractory animal on his mettle. On we go fast! past the glazier's pretty house, with its porch and its filbert walk; along the narrow lane bordered with elms, whose fallen leaves have made the road one yellow; past that little farm-house with the horse-chesnut trees before, glowing like oranges; past the white-washed school on the other side, gay with October roses; past the park, and the lodge, and the mansion, where once dwelt the great earl of Clarendon;—and now the rascal has begun to discover that Samuel Long and his whip are a mile off, and that his mistress is driving him, and he slackens his pace accordingly. Perhaps he feels the beauty of the road just here, and goes slowly to enjoy it. Very beautiful it certainly is. The park paling forms the boundary on one side, with fine clumps of oak, and deer in all attitudes; the water, tufted with alders, flowing along on the other. Another turn, and the water winds away, succeeded by a low hedge, and a sweep of green meadows; whilst the park and its paling are replaced by a steep bank, on which stands a small, quiet, village ale-house; and higher up, embosomed in wood, is the little country church, with its sloping church-yard and its low white steeple, peeping out from amongst magnificent yew-trees:

"Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
Up-coiling and invet'rately convolved."
WORDSWORTH.

No village-church was ever more happily placed. It is the very image of the peace and humbleness inculcated within its walls.

Ah! here is a higher hill rising before us, almost like a mountain. How grandly the view opens as we ascend over that wild bank, overgrown with fern, and heath, and gorse,

and between those tall hollies, glowing with their coral berries! What an expanse! But we have little time to gaze at present; for that piece of perversity, our horse, who has walked over so much level ground, has now, inspired, I presume, by a desire to revisit his stable, taken it into that unaccountable noddle of his to trot up this, the very steepest hill in the county. Here we are on the top; and in five minutes we have reached the lawn gate, and are in the very midst of that beautiful piece of art or nature (I do not know to which class it belongs,) the pleasure-ground of F. Hill. Never was the "prophetic eye of taste" exerted with more magical skill than in these plantations. Thirty years ago this place had no existence; it was a mere undistinguished tract of field and meadow and common land; now it is a mimic forest, delighting the eye with the finest combinations of trees and shrubs, the rarest effects of form and foliage, and bewildering the mind with its green glades, and impervious recesses, and apparently interminable extent. It is the triumph of landscape gardening, and never more beautiful than in this autumn sunset, lighting up the ruddy beech and the spotted sycamore, and gilding the shining fir-cones that hang so thickly amongst the dark pines. The robins are singing around us, as if they too felt the magic of the hour. How gracefully the road winds through the leafy labyrinth, leading imperceptibly to the more ornamented sweep. Here we are at the door amidst geraniums, and carnations, and jasmines, still in flower. Ah! here is a flower sweeter than all, a bird gayer than the robin, the little bird that chirps to the tune of "mamma! mamma!" the bright-faced fairy, whose tiny feet come pattering along, making a merry music, mamma's own Frances! And following her guidance, here we are in the dear round room, time enough to catch the last rays of the sun, as they light the noble landscape which lies like a panorama around us, lingering longest on that long island of old thorns and stunted oaks, the oasis of B. Heath, and then vanishing in a succession of gorgeous clouds.

October 28.—Another soft and brilliant morning. But the pleasures of to-day must be written in short-hand. I have left myself no room for notes of admiration.

First we drove about the coppice; an extensive wood of oak, and elm, and beech, chiefly the former, which adjoins the park paling of F. Hill, of which demesne, indeed, it forms one of the most delightful parts. The roads through the coppice are studiously wild, so that they have the appearance of mere cart-tracts; and the manner in which the ground is tumbled about, the steep declivities, the sunny slopes, the sudden swells and falls, now a close narrow valley, then a sharp ascent to an eminence, commanding an immense extent of prospect, have a striking air of natural beauty, developed and heightened by the perfection of art. All this, indeed, was familiar to me; the colouring only was new. I had been there in early spring, when the fragrant palms were on the willow, and the yellow tassels on the hazel, and every twig was swelling with renewed life; and I had been there again and again in the green leafiness of midsummer; but never as now, when the dark verdure of the fir-plantations, hanging over the picturesque and unequal paling, partly covered with moss and ivy, contrast so remarkably with the shining orange-leaves of the beech, already half fallen, the pale yellow of the scattering elm, the deeper and richer tints of the oak, and the glossy stems of the "lady of the woods," the delicate weeping birch. The underwood is no less picturesque. The red-spotted leaves and redder berries of the old thorns, the scarlet festoons of the bramble, the tall fern of every hue, seem to vie with the brilliant mosaic of the ground, now covered with dead leaves and strewn with fir-cones, now, where a little glade intervenes, gay with various mosses and splendid *fungi*. How beautiful is this coppice to-day! especially where the little spring, as clear as crystal, comes bubbling out from the "old fantastic" beech root, and trickles over the grass, bright and silent as the dew in a May morning. The wood pigeons (who are just returned from their summer migration, and are cropping the ivy berries) add their low cooings, the very note of love, to the slight fluttering of the fallen leaves in the quiet air, giving a voice to the sunshine and the beauty. This coppice is a place to live and die in. But we must go. And how fine is the ascent which leads us again into the world, past those cottages hidden as in a pit, and by that hanging orchard and that rough heathy bank! The scenery in this one spot has a wildness, an abruptness of rise and fall, rare in any part of England, rare above all in this rich and lovely but monotonous county. It is Switzerland in miniature.

And now we cross the hill to pay a morning visit to the family at the great house,—another fine place, commanding another fine sweep of country. The park studded with old trees and sinking gently into a valley, rich in wood and water, is in the best style of ornamental landscape, though more according to the common routine of gentlemen's seats than the singularly original place which we have just left. There is, however, one distinctive beauty in the grounds of the great house;—the magnificent firs which shade the terraces and surround the sweep, giving out in summer odours really Sabæan, and now in this low autumn sun producing an effect almost magical, as the huge red trunks, garlanded with ivy, stand out from the deep shadows like an army of giants. In-doors—Oh I must not take my readers in-doors, or we shall never get away!—In-doors

the sunshine is brighter still; for there, in a lofty lightsome room, sits a damsel fair and arch and *piquante*, one whom Titian or Velasquez should be born again to paint, leaning over an instrument* as sparkling and fanciful as herself, singing pretty French romances, and Scottish Jacobite songs, and all sorts of graceful and airy drolleries picked up I know not where—(an English improvvisatrice! a gayer Annot Lyle! whilst her sister, of a higher order of beauty, and with an earnest kindness in her smile that deepens its power, lends to the piano, as her father to the violin, an expression, a sensibility, a spirit, an eloquence, almost superhuman—almost divine! Oh to hear these two instruments accompanying my dear companion (I forgot to say that she is a singer worthy to be so accompanied) in Haydn's exquisite canzonet, "She never told her love,"—to hear her voice, with all its power, its sweetness, its gush of sound, so sustained and assisted by modulations that rivalled its intensity of expression; to hear at once such poetry, such music, such execution, is a pleasure never to be forgotten, or mixed with meaner things. I seem to hear it still.

As in the bursting spring-time o'er the eye
Of one who haunts the fields fair visions creep
Beneath the closed lids (afore dull sleep
Dims the quick fancy) of sweet flowers that lie
On grassy banks, oxlip of orient dye,
And palest primrose and blue violet,
All in their fresh and dewy beauty set,
Pictur'd within the sense, and will not fly:
So in mine ear resounds and lives again
One mingled melody,—a voice, a pair
Of instruments most voice-like! Of the air
Rather than of the earth seems that high strain
A spirit's song, and worthy of the train
That sooth'd old Prospero with music rare.

A PARTING GLANCE AT OUR VILLAGE.

It is now eighteen months since our village first sat for its picture, and I cannot say farewell to my courteous readers, without giving them some little intelligence of our goings on, a sort of parting glance at us and our condition. In outward appearance it hath, I suppose, undergone less alteration than any place of its inches in the kingdom. There it stands, the same long straggling street of pretty cottages, divided by pretty gardens, wholly unchanged in size or appearance, unincreased and undiminished by a single brick. To be sure, yesterday evening a slight misfortune happened to our goodly tenement, occasioned by the unlucky diligence mentioned in my first notice, which, under the conduct of a sleepy coachman, and a restive horse, contrived to knock down and demolish the wall of our court, and fairly to drive through the front garden, thereby destroying sundry curious stocks, carnations, and geraniums. It is a mercy that the unruly steed was content with battering the wall; for the messuage itself would come about our ears at the touch of a finger, and really there is one little end parlour, an after-thought of the original builder, which stands so temptingly in the way, that I wonder the sagacious quadruped missed it. There was quite din enough without that addition. The three insides (ladies) squalling from the interior of that commodious vehicle; the outsides (gentlemen) swearing on the roof; the coachman still half asleep, but unconsciously blowing his horn; we in the house screaming and scolding; the passers-by shouting and hallooing; and May, who little brooked such an invasion of her territories, barking in her tremendous lion-note, and putting down the other noises like a clap of thunder. But passengers, coachman, horses, and spectators, all righted at last; and there is no harm done but to my flowers and to the wall. May, however, stands bewailing the ruins, for that low wall was her favourite haunt; she used to parade backwards and forwards on the top of it, as if to show herself, just after the manner of a peacock on the top of a house; and would sit or lie for hours on the corner next the gate, basking in the sunshine like a marble statue. Really she has quite the air of one who laments the destruction of personal property; but the wall is to be rebuilt to-morrow, with old weather-stained bricks—no patch-work! and exactly in the same form; May herself will not find the difference; so that in the way of alteration this little misfortune will pass for nothing. Neither have we any improvements worth calling such. Except that the wheeler's green door hath been retouched, out of the same pot (as I judge from the tint) with which he furbished up our new-old pony-chaise; that the shop-window of our neighbour, the universal dealer, hath been beautified, and his name and calling splendidly set forth in yellow letters on a black ground; and that our landlord of the Rose hath hoisted a new sign of unparalleled splendour; one side consisting of a full-faced damask rose, of the size and hue of a piony, the other of a maiden blush in profile, which looks exactly like a carnation, so that both flowers are considerably indebted to the modesty of the "out-of-door artist," who has warily written The Rose under each;—except these trifling ornaments, which nothing but the jealous eye of a lover could detect, the dear place is altogether unchanged.

The only real improvement with which we have been visited for our sins—(I hate all innovation, whether for better or worse, as if I was a furious Tory, or a woman of three-score and ten)—the only misfortune of that sort which has befallen us, is underfoot. The road

* The dital harp.

has been adjusted on the plan of Mr. MacAdam; and a tremendous operation it is. I do not know what good may ensue; but for the last six months, some part or other of the highway has been impassable for any feet, except such as are shod by the blacksmith; and even the four-footed people who wear iron shoes, make wry faces, poor things! at those stones, enemies to man and beast. However, the business is nearly done now; we are covered with sharp flints every inch of us, except a "bad step" up the hill, which, indeed, looks like a bit cut out of the deserts of Arabia, fitter for camels and caravans than for Christian horses and coaches; a point, which, in spite of my dislike of alteration, I was forced to acknowledge to our surveyor, a portly gentleman, who, in a smart gig, drawn by a prancing steed, was kicking up a prodigious dust at that very moment. He and I ought to be great enemies; for, besides the MacAdamite enormity of the stony road, he hath actually been guilty of tree-murder, having been an accessary before the fact in the death of three limes along the rope-walk—dear sweet innocent limes, that did no harm on earth except shading the path! I never should have forgiven that offence, had not their removal, by opening a beautiful view from the village up the hill, reconciled even my tree-loving eye to their abstraction. And, to say the truth, though we have had twenty little squabbles, there is no bearing malice with our surveyor; he is so civil and good-humoured, such an honest earnestness in his vocation (which is gratuitous by the by), and such an intense conviction that the state of the turnpike road between B. and K. is the principal affair of this life, that I would not undeceive him for the world. How often have I seen him on a cold winter morning, with a face all frost and business, great-coated up to the eyes, driving from post to post, from one gang of labourers to another, praising, scolding, ordering, cheated, laughed at, and liked by them all! Well, when once the hill is finished, we shall have done with him for ever, as he used to tell me by way of consolation, when I shook my head at him, as he went jolting along over his dear new roads, at the imminent risk of his springs and his bones: we shall see no more of him; for the MacAdam ways are warranted not to wear out. So be it; I never wish to see a road-mender again.

But if the form of outward things be all unchanged around us, if the dwellings of man remain the same to the sight and the touch, the little world within hath undergone its usual mutations;—the hive is the same, but of the bees some are dead and some are flown away, and some that we left insects in the shell, are already putting forth their young wings.—Children in our village really sprout up like mushrooms; the air is so promotive of growth, that the rogues spring into men and women, as if touched by Harlequin's wand, and are quite offended if one happens to say or do any thing which has a reference to their previous condition. My father grievously affronted Sally L. only yesterday, by bestowing upon her a great lump of ginger-bread, with which he had stuffed his pockets at a fair. She immediately, as she said, gave it to the "children." Now Sally cannot be above twelve to my certain knowledge, though taller than I am.—Lizzy herself is growing womanly. I actually caught that little lady stuck upon a chest of drawers, contemplating herself in the glass, and striving with all her might to gather the rich curls that hang about her neck, and turn them under a comb. Well! if Sally and Lizzy live to be old maids, they may probably make the *amende honorable* to time, and wish to be thought young again. In the mean while, shall we walk up the street?

The first cottage is that of Mr. H. the patriot, the illuminator, the independent and sturdy, yet friendly member of our little state, who, stout and comely, with a handsome chaise-cart, a strong mare, and a neat garden, might have passed for a portrait of that enviable class of Englishmen, who, after a youth of frugal industry, sit down in some retired place to "live upon their means." He and his wife seemed the happiest couple on earth; except a little too much leisure, I never suspected that they had one trouble or one care. But Care, the witch, will come everywhere, even to that happiest station and this prettiest place. She came in one of her most terrific forms—blindness—or (which is perhaps still more tremendous) the faint glimmering light and gradual darkness which precedes the total eclipse. For a long time we had missed the pleasant bustling officiousness, the little services, the voluntary tasks, which our good neighbour loved so well. Fruit trees were blighted, and escaped his grand specific fumigation; wasps multiplied, and their nests remained untraced; the cheerful modest knock with which, just at the very hour when he knew it could be spared, he presented himself to ask for the newspaper, was heard no more; he no longer hung over his gate to waylay passengers, and entice them into chat; at last he even left off driving his little chaise, and was only seen moping up and down the garden walk, or stealing gropingly from the wood-pile to the house. He evidently shunned conversation or questions, forbade his wife to tell what ailed him, and even when he put a green shade over his darkened eyes, fled from human sympathy with a stern pride that seemed almost ashamed of the humbling infirmity. That strange (but to a vigorous and healthy man perhaps natural) feeling soon softened. The disease increased hourly, and he became dependent on his excellent wife for every comfort and relief. She had many willing assistants in her labour of love; all his neighbours

strove to return, according to their several means, the kindness which all had received from him in some shape or another. The country boys, to whose service he had devoted so much time, in shaping bats, constructing bows and arrows, and other quips and trickeries of the same nature, vied with each other in performing little offices about the yard and stable; and John Evans, the half-witted gardener, to whom he had been a constant friend, repaid his goodness by the most unwearied attention. Gratitude seemed to sharpen poor John's perception and faculties. There is an old man in our parish work-house, who occasionally walks through the street, led by a little boy holding the end of a long stick. The idea of this man, who had lived in utter blindness for thirty years, was always singularly distressing to Mr. H. I shall never forget the address with which our simple gardener used to try to divert his attention from this miserable fellow-sufferer. He would get between them to prevent the possibility of recognition by the dim and uncertain vision; would talk loudly to drown the peculiar noise, the sort of duet of feet, caused by the quick short steps of the child, and the slow irregular tread of the old man; he would turn the conversation with an adroitness and acuteness that might put to shame the proudest intellect. So passed many months. At last Mr. H. was persuaded to consult a celebrated oculist, and the result was most comforting. The disease was ascertained to be a cataract; and now with the increase of darkness came an increase of hope. The film spread, thickened, ripened, speedily and healthily; and to-day the requisite operation has been performed with equal skill and success. You may still see some of the country boys lingering round the gate with looks of strong and wondering interest; poor John is going to and fro, he knows not for what, unable to rest a moment; Mrs. H., too, is walking in the garden shedding tears of thankfulness; and he who came to support their spirit, the stout strong-hearted farmer A., seems trembling and overcome. The most tranquil person in the house is probably the patient: he bore the operation with resolute firmness, and *he has seen again.* Think of the bliss bound up in those four words! He is in darkness now, and must remain so for some weeks; but he has seen, and he will see; and that humble cottage is again a happy dwelling.

Next we come to the shoemaker's abode. All is unchanged there, except that its master becomes more industrious and more pale-faced, and that his fair daughter is a notable exemplification of the developement which I have already noticed amongst our young things. But she is in the real transition state, just emerging from the crysalis—and the eighteen months between fourteen and a half and sixteen, would metamorphose a child into a woman all the world over. She is still pretty, but not so elegant as when she wore frocks and pin-afores, and unconsciously classical, parted her long brown locks in the middle of her forehead, and twisted them up in a knot behind, giving to her finely-shaped head and throat the air of a Grecian statue. Then she was stirring all day in her small housewifery, or her busy idleness, delving and digging in her flower-border, tossing and dangling every infant that came within her reach, feeding pigs and poultry, playing with May, and prattling with an open-hearted frankness to the country lads, who assemble at evening in the shop to enjoy a little gentle gossiping; for be it known to my London readers, that the shoemaker's in a country village is now what (according to tradition and the old novels) the barber's used to be, the resort of all the male newsmongers, especially the young. Then she talked to these visiters gaily and openly, sang and laughed and ran in and out, and took no more thought of a young man than of a gosling. Then she was only fourteen. Now she wears gowns and aprons,—puts her hair in paper, has left off singing, talks,—has left off running, walks,—nurses the infants with a grave solemn grace,—has entirely cut her former playmate Mayflower, who tosses her pretty head as much as to say—who cares?—and has nearly renounced all acquaintance with the visiters of the shop, who are by no means disposed to take matters so quietly. There she stands on the threshold, shy and demure, just vouchsafing a formal nod or a faint smile as they pass, and, if she in her turn be compelled to pass the open door of their news-room (for the working apartment is separate from the house) edging along as slyly and mincingly as if there were no such beings as young men in the world. Exquisite coquette! I think (she is my opposite neighbour, and I have a right to watch her doings,—the right of retaliation), there is one youth particularly distinguished by her non-notice, one whom she never will see or speak to, who stands a very fair chance to carry her off. He is called Jem Tanner, and is a fine lad, with an open ruddy countenance, a clear blue eye, and curling hair of that tint which the poets are pleased to denominate golden. Though not one of our eleven, he was a promising cricketer. We have missed him lately on the green at the Sunday evening game, and I find on inquiry that he now visits a chapel about a mile off, where he is the best male singer, as our nymph of the shoe-shop is incomparably the first female. I am not fond of betting; but I would venture the lowest stake of gentility, a silver threepence, that, before the winter ends, a wedding will be the result of these weekly meetings at the chapel. In the long dark evenings, when the father has enough to do in piloting the mother with conjugal gallantry through the dirty lanes, think of the opportunity that Jem will have to escort the

daughter. A little difficulty he may have to encounter; the lass will be coy for a while; the mother will talk of their youth, the father of their finances; but the marriage, I doubt not, will ensue.

Next in order, on the other side of the street, is the blacksmith's house. Change has been busy here in a different and more awful form. Our sometime constable, the tipsiest of parish officers, of blacksmiths and of men, is dead. Returning from a revel with a companion as full of beer as himself, one or the other, or both, contrived to overset the cart in a ditch; (the living scapegrace is pleased to lay the blame of the mishap on the horse, but that is contrary to all probability, this respectable quadruped being a water drinker;) and inward bruises, acting on inflamed blood and an impaired constitution, carried him off in a very short time, leaving an ailing wife and eight children, the eldest of whom is only fourteen years of age. This sounds like a very tragical story; yet, perhaps, because the loss of a drunken husband is not quite so great a calamity as the loss of a sober one, the effect of this event is not altogether so melancholy as might be expected. The widow, when she was a wife, had a complaining broken-spirited air, a peevish manner, a whining voice, a dismal countenance, and a person so neglected and slovenly, that it was difficult to believe that she had once been remarkably handsome. She is now quite another woman. The very first Sunday she put on her weeds, we all observed how tidy and comfortable she looked; how much her countenance, in spite of a decent show of tears, was improved, and how completely through all her sighings her tone had lost its peevishness. I have never seen her out of spirits or out of humour since. She talks and laughs and bustles about, managing her journeymen and scolding her children as notably as any dame in the parish. The very house looks more cheerful; she has cut down the old willow trees that stood in the court, and let in the light; and now the sun glances brightly from the casement windows, and plays amidst the vine-leaves and the clusters of grapes which cover the walls; the door is newly painted, and shines like the face of its mistress; even the forge has lost half its dinginess. Every thing smiles. She indeed talks by fits of "poor George," especially when any allusion to her old enemy, mine host of the Rose, brings the deceased to her memory; then she bewails (as is proper) her dear husband and her desolate condition; calls herself a lone widow; sighs over her eight children; complains of the troubles of business, and tries to persuade herself and others that she is as wretched as a good wife ought to be. But this will not do. She is a happier woman than she has been any time these fifteen years, and she knows it. My dear village-husbands, if you have a mind that your wives should be really sorry when you die, whether by a fall from a cart or otherwise, keep from the ale-house!

Next comes the tall thin red house, that ought to boast genteeler inmates than its short fat mistress, its children, its pigs, and its quantity of noise, happiness, and vulgarity. The din is greater than ever. The husband, a merry jolly tar, with a voice that sounds as if issuing from a speaking-trumpet, is returned from a voyage to India; and another little one, a chubby roaring boy, has added his lusty cries to the family concert.

This door, blockaded by huge bales of goods, and half darkened by that moving mountain, the tilted wagon of the S. mill which stands before it, belongs to the village shop. Increase has been here too in every shape. Within fourteen months two little, pretty, quiet girls, have come into the world. Before Fanny could well manage to totter across the road to her good friend the nymph of the shoe-shop, Margaret made her appearance; and poor Fanny, discarded at once from the maid's arms and her mother's knee, degraded from the rank and privileges of "the baby," (for at that age precedence is strangely reversed,) would have had a premature foretaste of the instability of human felicity, had she not taken refuge with that best of nurses, a fond father. Every thing thrives about the shop, from the rosy children to the neat maid and the smart apprentice. No room now for lodgers, and no need! The young mantua-making school-mistresses, the old inmates, are gone; one of them not very far. She grew tired of scolding little boys and girls about their A, B, C, and of being scolded in her turn by their sisters and mothers about pelisses and gowns; so she gave up both trades about a year ago, and has been ever since our pretty Harriet. I do not think she has ever repented of the exchange, though it might not perhaps have been made so soon, had not her elder sister, who had been long engaged to an attendant at one of the colleges of Oxford, thought herself on the point of marriage just as our housemaid left us. Poor Betsy! She had fared the fate of many a prouder maiden, wearing out her youth in expectation of the promotion that was to authorise her union with the man of her heart. Many a year had she waited in smiling constancy, fond of William in no common measure, and proud of him, as well she might be; for, when the vacation so far lessened his duties as to render a short absence practicable, and he stole up here for a few days to enjoy her company, it was difficult to distinguish him in air and manner, as he sauntered about in elegant indolence with his fishing-rod and his flute, from the young Oxonians his masters. At last promotion came; and Betsy, apprised of it, by an affectionate and congratulatory letter from his sister, prepared her wedding-clothes, and

looked hourly for the bridegroom. No bridegroom came. A second letter announced, with regret and indignation, that William had made another choice, and was to be married early in the ensuing month. Poor Betsy! We were alarmed for her health, almost for her life. She wept incessantly, took no food, wandered recklessly about from morning till night, lost her natural rest, her flesh, her colour; and in less than a week she was so altered, that no one would have known her. Consolation and remonstrance were alike rejected, till at last Harriet happened to strike the right chord, by telling her that "she wondered at her want of spirit." This was touching her on the point of honour; she had always been remarkably high-spirited, and could as little brook the imputation as a soldier, or a gentleman. This lucky suggestion gave an immediate turn to her feelings; anger and scorn succeeded to grief; she wiped her eyes, "hemmed away a sigh," and began to scold most manfully. She did still better. She recalled an old admirer, who in spite of repeated rejections had remained constant in his attachment, and made such good speed, that she was actually married the day before her faithless lover, and is now the happy wife of a very respectable tradesman.

Ah! the in-and-out cottage! the dear, dear home! No weddings there! No changes! except that the white kitten, who sits purring at the window under the great myrtle, has succeeded to his lamented grandfather, our beautiful Persian cat, I cannot find one alteration to talk about. The wall of the court indeed—but that will be mended to-morrow.

Here is the new sign, the well-frequented Rose Inn! Plenty of changes there! Our landlord is always improving, if it be only a pig-sty or a water-trough—plenty of changes, and one splendid wedding. Miss Phœbe is married, not to her old lover the recruiting sergeant (for he had one wife already, probably more,) but to a patten-maker, as errant a dandy as ever wore mustachios. How Phœbe could "abase her eyes" from the stately sergeant to this youth, half a foot shorter than herself, whose "waist would go into any alderman's thumb-ring," might, if the final choice of a coquette had ever been a matter of wonder, have occasioned some speculation. But our patten-maker is a man of spirit; and the wedding was of extraordinary splendour.—Three gigs, each containing four persons, graced the procession, besides numerous carts and innumerable pedestrians. The bride was equipped in muslin and satin, and really looked very pretty with her black sparkling eyes, her clear brown complexion, her blushes and her smiles; the bride-maidens were only less smart than the bride, and the bridegroom was "point device in his accoutrements," and as munificent as a nabob. Cake flew about the village; plum-puddings were abundant; and strong beer, ay, even mine host's best double X, was profusely distributed. There was all manner of eating and drinking, with singing, fiddling, and dancing between; and in the evening, to crown all, there was Mr. Moon the conjuror. Think of that stroke of good fortune!—Mr. Moon the very pearl of all conjurors, who had the honour of puzzling and delighting their late Majesties with his "wonderful and pleasing exhibition of thaumaturgics, tachygraphy, mathematical operations and magical deceptions," happened to arrive about an hour before dinner, and commenced his ingenious deceptions very unintentionally at our house. Calling to apply for permission to perform in the village, being equipped in a gay scarlet coat, and having something smart and sportsman-like in his appearance, he was announced by Harriet as one of the gentlemen of the C. Hunt, and taken (*mis*taken I should have said) by the whole family for a certain captain newly arrived in the neighbourhood. That misunderstanding, which must, I think, have retaliated on Mr. Moon a little of the puzzlement that he inflicts on others, vanished of course at the production of his bill of fare; and the requested permission was instantly given. Never could he have arrived in a happier hour! Never were spectators more gratified or more scared. All the tricks prospered. The cock crew after his head was cut off; and half-crowns and sovereigns flew about as if winged;—the very wedding-ring could not escape Mr. Moon's incantations. We heard of nothing else for a week. From the bridegroom, *un esprit fort*, who defied all manner of conjuration and *diablerie*, down to my Lizzy, whose boundless faith swallows the Arabian tales, all believed and trembled.—So thoroughly were men, women, and children, impressed with the idea of the worthy conjuror's dealings with the devil, that when he had occasion to go to B., not a soul would give him a cast, from pure awe; and if it had not been for our pony chaise, poor Mr. Moon must have walked. I hope he is really a prophet; for he foretold all happiness to the new-married pair.

So this pretty white house with the lime-trees before it, which has been under repair for these three years, is on the point of being finished.—The vicar has taken it, as the vicarage house is not yet fit for his reception. He has sent before him a neat modest maid-servant, whose respectable appearance gives a character to her master and mistress,—a hamper full of flower-roots, sundry boxes of books, a piano-forte, and some simple and useful furniture. Well, we shall certainly have neighbours, and I have a presentiment that we shall find friends.

Lizzy, you may now come along with me round the corner and up the lane, just to the end of the wheeler's shop, and then we shall go home; it is high time. What is this *affiche*

in the parlour window? "Apartments to let,—inquire within." These are certainly the curate's lodgings—is he going away? Oh I suppose the new vicar will do his own duty—yet, however well he may do it, rich and poor will regret the departure of Mr. B. Well, I hope he may soon get a good living. "Lodgings to let"—who ever thought of seeing such a placard hereabout? The lodgings, indeed, are very convenient for "a single gentleman, a man and his wife, or two sisters," as the newspapers say—comfortable apartments, neat and tasty withal, and the civilest of all civil treatment from the host and hostess. But who would ever have dreamt of such a notice? Lodgings to let in our village!

PREFACE.*

The indulgent reception given to her little book of Our Village, has encouraged the author to extend her work by putting forth a second volume on a similar plan; consisting, like the first, of slight and simple delineations of country manners, blended with a few sketches drawn from a somewhat higher rank of society.

A WALK THROUGH THE VILLAGE.

When I had the honour about two years ago of presenting our little village to that multiform and most courteous personage the Public, I hinted I think that it had a trick of standing still, of remaining stationary, unchanged, and unimproved in this most changeable and improving world. This habit, whether good or evil, it has retained so pertinaciously, that except that it is two years older, I cannot point out a single alteration which has occurred in our street. I was on the point of paying the inhabitants some equivocal compliment—and really I almost may—for, setting aside the inevitable growth of the young members of our community, and a few more grey hairs and wrinkles amongst the elder, I see little change. We are the same people, the same generation, neither richer, nor wiser, nor better, nor worse. Some, to be sure, have migrated; and one or two have died; and some—But we had better step out into the village, and look about us.

It is a pleasant lively scene this May morning, with the sun shining so gaily on the irregular rustic dwellings, intermixed with their pretty gardens; a cart and wagon watering (it would be more correct, perhaps, to say *beering*) at the Rose; Dame Wheeler, with her basket and her brown loaf, just coming from the bake-house; the nymph of the shoe-shop feeding a large family of goslings at the open door—they are very late this year, those noisy little geese; two or three women in high gossip dawdling up the street; Charles North the gardener, with his blue apron and ladder on his shoulder, walking rapidly by; a cow and a donkey browsing the grass by the wayside; my white greyhound, Mayflower, sitting majestically in front of her own stable; and ducks, chickens, pigs, and children, scattered over all.

A pretty scene!—rather more lopping of trees, indeed, and clipping of hedges, along the high road, than one quite admires; but then that identical turnpike-road, my ancient despair, is now so perfect and so beautiful a specimen of MacAdamization, that one even learns to like tree-lopping and hedge-clipping for the sake of such smooth ways. It is simply the best road in England, so says our surveyor, and so say I. The three miles between us and B—— are like a bowling-green. By the way, I ought, perhaps, to mention, as something like change in our outward position, that this little hamlet of ours is much nearer to that illustrious and worshipful town than it used to be. Not that our quiet street hath been guilty of the unbecoming friskiness of skipping from place to place, but that our ancient neighbour, whose suburbs are sprouting forth in all directions, hath made a particularly strong shoot towards us, and threatens some day or other to pay us a visit bodily. The good town has already pushed the turnpike gate half a mile nearer to us, and is in a fair way to overleap that boundary and build on, till the buildings join ours, as London has done by Hampstead or Kensington. What a strange figure our rude and rustical habitations would cut ranged by the side of some staring red row of newly-erected houses, each as like the other as two drops of water, with courts before and behind, a row of poplars opposite and a fine new name. How different we should look in our countless variety of nooks and angles, our gardens, and arbours, and lime-trees, and pond! but this union of town and country will hardly happen in my time, let B—— enlarge as it may. We shall certainly lend no assistance, for our boundaries still continue exactly the same.

The first cottage—Ah! there is the post-cart coming up the road at its most respectable rumble, that cart, or rather caravan, which so much resembles a house upon wheels, or a show of the smaller kind at a country fair. It is now crammed full of passengers, the driver just protruding his head and hands out of the vehicle, and the sharp clever boy, who, in the occasional absence of his father, officiates as deputy, perched like a monkey on the roof. "Any letters to day?" And that

* To the second volume, as originally published.

question, always so interesting, being unsatisfactorily answered, I am at leisure to return to our survey. The first cottage is that erst inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. H. the retired publican and his good wife. They are gone; I always thought we were too quiet for them; and his eyes being quite recovered, he felt the weariness of idleness more than ever. So they returned to W., where he has taken a comfortable lodging next door to their old and well-frequented Inn, the Pie and Parrot, where he has the pleasure every evening of reading the newspaper, and abusing the ministers amongst his old customers, himself a customer; as well as of lending his willing aid in waiting and entertaining on fair-days and market-days, at pink-feasts and melon-feasts, to the great solace of mine host, and the no small perplexity of the guests, who, puzzled between the old landlord and the new, hardly know to whom to pay their reckoning, or which to call to account for a bad tap:—a mistake, which our sometime neighbour, happier than he has been since he left the *Bar*, particularly enjoys. His successor here is an industrious person, by calling a seedsman, as may be collected by the heaps of pea and bean seed, clover and vetches, piled tier above tier against the window.

The little white cottage down the lane which stands so prettily, backed by a tall elm wood, has also lost its fair inmate, Sally Wheeler; who finding that Joel continued constant to our pretty Harriet, and was quite out of hope, was suddenly forsaken by the fit of dutifulness which brought her to keep her deaf grandmother company, and returned to service. Dame Wheeler has however a companion, in a widow of her own standing, appointed by the parish to live with, and take care of her. A nice tidy old woman is Dame Shearman;—pity that she looks so frumpish; her face seems fixed in one perpetual scold. It was not so when she lived with her sister on the Lea: then she was a light-hearted merry chatterer, whose tongue ran all day long—and that's the reason of her cross look now! Mrs. Wheeler is as deaf as a post, and poor Mrs. Shearman is pining of a suppression of speech. Fancy what it is for a woman, especially a talking woman, to live without a listener! forced either to hold her peace, or when that becomes impossible, to talk to one to whose sense words are as air! La Trappe is nothing to this tantalization;—besides the Trappists were men. No wonder that poor Dame Shearman looks cross.

The Blacksmith's! no change in that quarter; except a most astonishing growth amongst the children. George looks quite a man, and Betsy, who was just like a blue-eyed doll, with her flaxen curls and her apple-blossom complexion, the prettiest fairy that ever was seen, now walks up to school every morning with her work-bag and her spelling-book, and is really a great girl. They are a fine family from the eldest to the youngest.

The shoemaker's!—not much to talk of there; no funeral! and (which disappoints my prediction) no wedding! My pretty neighbour has not yet made her choice. She does wisely to look about her. A belle and an heiress—I dare say she'll have a hundred pounds to her portion—and still in her teens, has some right to be nice. Besides, what would all the mammas, whose babies she nurses, and all the children whom she spoils, do without her? No sparing the shoemaker's fair daughter! She must not marry yet these half-dozen years!

The shop!—all prosperous, tranquil, and thriving; another little one coming; an idle apprentice run away,—more of him anon; and a civil journeyman hired in his room. An excellent exchange! Jesse is a very agreeable person. He is the politician of the village since we have lost Mr. H., and as he goes every day into B—— in his paper cap to carry our country bread, he is sure to bring home the latest intelligence of all sorts, especially of canvassing and electioneering. Jesse has the most complete collection of squibs in the country, and piques himself on his skill in detecting the writers. He will bestow as many guesses, and bring forward as many proofs on occasion of a hand-bill signed "Fair-Play," or a song subscribed "True-blue," as ever were given to that abiding riddle, the authorship of Junius—and very likely come as near the mark.

Ah, the dear home! A runaway there too! I may as well tell the story now, although very sorry to have to record so sad an act of delinquency of my clients the boys, as an elopement from our own premises.

Henry Hamilton—that ever a parish boy, offspring of a tailor and a cook-maid, should have an appellation so fitted to the hero of a romance! Henry Hamilton had lived with us for three years and upwards as man of all work, part waterer of my geraniums, sole feeder of May, the general favourite and factotum of the family. Being an orphan with no home but the workhouse, no friend but the overseer, at whose recommendation he was engaged, he seemed to belong to us in an especial manner, to have a more than common claim on protection and kindness. Henry was just the boy to discover and improve this feeling;—quick, clever, capable, subtle, and supple; exceedingly agreeable in manner, and pleasant in appearance. He had a light, pliant form, with graceful delicate limbs like a native Indian; a dark but elegant countenance sparkling with expression; and a remarkable variety and versatility of talent. Nothing came amiss to him.—In one week he hath been carpenter, blacksmith, painter, tinker, glazier, tailor, cobbler, and wheelwright. These were but a few of his multifarious ac-

complishments; he would beat Harriet at needle-work, and me in gardening. All the parish was in the habit of applying to him on emergency, and I never knew him decline a job in my life. He hath mended a straw bonnet and a smoke-jack, cleaned a clock, constructed a donkey-cart, and dressed a doll.

With all these endowments, Henry was scarcely so good a servant as a duller boy. Besides that he undertook so many things that full half of them were of necessity left unfinished, he was generally to seek when wanted, and after sending a hue and cry round the neighbourhood, would be discovered at the blacksmith's or the collar-maker's intently occupied on some devices of his own. Then he had been praised for invention, till he thought it necessary to display that brilliant quality on all occasions, by which means we, who are exceedingly simple, old-fashioned, matter-of-fact people, were constantly posed by new-fangled novelties, which nobody but the artist could use, or quibs and quiddities of no use whatever. Thus we had fastenings for boxes that would not open, and latches for gates that refused to shut, bellows of a new construction that no mortal could blow, and traps that caught fingers instead of rats; May was nearly choked by an improved slip, and my white Camellia killed outright by an infallible wash for insects.

Notwithstanding these mishaps, we all liked Henry; his master liked his sportsmanship, his skill and boldness in riding, and the zeal with which he would maintain the honour of his own dogs, right or wrong; his mistress liked his civility and good humour; Harriet felt the value of his alert assistance; and I had a real respect for his resource. In the village he was less a favourite; he looked down upon the other boys; and the men, although amused by his cleverness, looked down upon him.

At last he unfortunately met with a friend of his own age in a clever apprentice, who arrived at our neighbour the baker's from the good town of B——. This youngster, "for shortness called" Bill, was a thorough town boy: you might see at a glance that he had been bred in the streets. He was a bold sturdy lad, with a look compounded of great impudence and a little slyness, and manners, although characterised by the former of these amiable qualities. His voice was a shout, his walk a swagger, and his knock at the door a bounce that threatened to bring the house about our ears. The very first time that I saw him he was standing before our court with a switch in his hand, with which he was alternately menacing May, who, nothing daunted, returned his attack by an incessant bark, and demolishing a superb crown imperial. Never was a more complete *mauvais sujet*.

This audacious urchin most unfortunately took a great fancy to Henry, which Henry, caught by the dashing assurance of his manner, most unluckily returned. They became friends after the fashion of Orestes and Pylades, or Damon and Pythias, fought for each other, lied for each other, and, finally, ran away with each other. The reason for Bill's evasion was manifest, his conduct having been such that his master had been compelled to threaten him with Bridewell and the treadmill; but why Henry, who, although his invention had latterly taken a decided bent towards that branch of ingenuity called mischief, might still have walked quietly out of the street door with a good character in his pocket, should choose to elope from the garret window, is best known to himself. Off they set upward—that is to say Londonward, the common destination of your country youths who sally forth to try their fortune. Forth they set, and in about a week they were followed by a third runaway, a quiet, simple, modest-looking lad, a sort of hanger-on to the other two, and an apprentice to our worthy neighbour the carpenter. Poor Ned! we were sorry for him; he was of some promise as a cricketer—(by the way, Bill never went near the ground, which I always thought a bad sign;)—Ned would really have made a good cricketer, not a brilliant hitter, but an excellent stopper of the ball; one of your safe steady players, whom there is no putting out. Nobody ever dreamt of his running away. We all knew that he was a little idle, and that he was a sort of follower of Bill's—but Ned to decamp! He must have gone out of pure imitation, just as geese waddle into a pond in single file, or as one sheep or pig will follow another through a gap in the hedge;—sheer imitation! A notable example of the harm that one town-bred youth will work in a country village! Go he did, and back he is come, poor fellow! thin as a herring, and ragged as a colt, a mere moral to tag a tale withal. He has not had a day's work since he left his good master, nor, to judge from his looks, a sufficient meal. His account of the other two worthies is just what I expected. Henry, after many ups and downs, (during one of which he was within half an inch of being a soldier, that is to say, he *did* enlist, and wanted only that much of the standard,) is now in a good place, and likely to do well. His *fidus Achates*, Bill, has disappeared from London as he did from the country. No one knows what is become of him. For my own part, I never looked for any good from a lad, who, to say nothing of his graver iniquities, kept away from the cricket ground, thrashed my flowers, and tried to thrash May.

The flourishing and well-accustomed Rose Inn has lost its comely mistress, a harmless, blameless, kindly-tempered woman, with a pleasant smile and a gentle voice, who withered suddenly in the very strength and pride

of womanhood, and died lamented by high and low. She is succeeded in the management of that respectable hostelry by two light-footed and light-hearted lasses of twelve and thirteen, who skip about after their good bustling father with an officious civility that the guests find irresistible, and conduct the house-keeping with a frugality and forethought beyond their years.

The white house, with the limes in front, has also lost, though not by death, our good vicar and his charming family. They have taken possession of their own pretty dwelling; and their removal has given me an opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with all the crooks and turnings, the gates, ponds, and pollards of the vicarage lane;—a walk which on that event I suddenly discovered to be one of the prettiest in the neighbourhood.

Ah! here is Lizzy, half leaning half riding on the gate of her own court, looking very demure, and yet quite ripe for a frolic. Lizzy has in some measure outgrown her beauty; which desirable possession does very often run away from a young lady at six years old, and come back again at twelve. I think that such will be the case here. She is still a very nice little girl, quick, clever, active, and useful; goes to school; cooks upon occasion her father's dinner; and is beyond all comparison the handiest little waiting-woman in the parish. She is waiting now to speak to her playmate and companion the wheelwright's daughter, who, with all her mother's attentive politeness, is running down the street with an umbrella and her clogs, to fence their lodger, Mrs. Hay, from the ill effects of a summer shower. I think that we have had about a dozen drops of rain, and where they came from no mortal can guess, for there is not a cloud in the sky; but there goes little Mary with a grave civility, a curtsying earnestness that would be quite amusing in so young a child, if the feelings that dictated the attention were not so good and so real, and the object so respectable.

Mrs. Hay is a widow, a slight, delicate elderly person, in a well-preserved black silk gown, a neat quiet bonnet never in fashion, nor ever wholly out, snow-white stockings, and a handsome grey shawl—her invariable walking costume. She makes no visits; cultivates no acquaintance; and seldom leaves her neat quiet room except to glide into church on a Sunday, and to take a short walk on some fine spring morning. No one knows precisely what Mrs. Hay's station has been, but every body feels that she is an object of interest and respect.

Now up the hill! past the white cottage of the little mason, whiter than ever, for it has just been beautified; past the darker but still prettier dwelling of the lieutenant, mantled with sweetbriar and honeysuckles, and fruit-trees of all sorts; one turn to look at the landscape so glowingly bright and green, with its affluence of wood dappled with villages and gentlemen's seats, the wide-spreading town of B—— lying in the distance with its spires and towers, the Thames and the Kennett winding along their lines of light like glittering serpents, and the O—— hills rising beyond; one glance at that glorious prospect, and here we are at the top of the hill, on the open common, where the air is so fresh and pure, and the sun shines so gaily on the golden furze.

Did I say there were no alterations in our village? Could I so utterly forget the great doings on the top of the hill, where, by dint of whitening and sash-windowing, and fresh-dooring, the old ample farm-house has become a very genteel-looking residence? Or the cottage on the common opposite, or rather the two cottages, which have by a similar transmogrification been laid into one, and now form, with their new cart-shed, their double garden, and their neat paling, so pretty and comfortable a home for the respectable mistress of the little village school and her industrious husband? How could I forget that cottage, whose inhabitants I see so often and like so well!

Mr. Moore is the greatest market-gardener in the parish; and leads his donkey chaise through the street every summer afternoon, vending fruit and vegetables, and followed by a train of urchins of either sex. Some who walk up boldly to the cart, halfpenny customers, who ask questions and change their minds, balance between the merits of cherries and gooseberries, and gravely calculate under what form of fruit they may get most eating for their money.* These are the rich. Others, the shy, who stand aloof, are penniless elves, silent petitioners, who wait about with longing looks, till some child-loving purchaser, or Mr. Moore himself, unable to withstand those pleading eyes, flings them a dole, and gives them the double delight of the frui and the scramble.

The dear cricket ground! Even at this hour there are boys loitering about that beloved scene of evening pastime, not quite playing, but idling and lounging, and looking as if they longed to play. My friend, the little Hussar, with his blue jacket and his immovable gravity, is the quietest of the party, and Ben Kirby, youngest brother of Joe, (I think I have spoken of Ben before,) by far the noisiest. Joe no longer belongs to the boys' side,

* It is amusing to see how very early poor children become acquainted with the rate of exchange between the smaller denominations of coin and the commodities—such as cakes, nuts, and ginger-bread—which they purchase. No better judge of the currency question than a country brat of three years old. Lizzy, before she could speak plain, was so knowing in cakes and halfpence, that it was a common amusement with the people at the shop where she dealt to try to cheat her, and watch her excessive anger when she detected the imposition. She was sure to find them out, and was never pacified till she had all that was due to her.

having been promoted to play with the men; and Ben has succeeded to his post as chief and leader of the youngsters. Joe is a sort of person to make himself happy anywhere, but I suspect that he has not at present gained much pleasure by the exchange. It is always a very equivocal advantage when a person is removed from the first place in one class, to the lowest in the rank just above; and in the present instance poor Joe seems to me to have gained little by his preferment except the honour of being Fag general to the whole party. His feelings must be something like those of a provincial actor transplanted to the London boards, who finds himself on the scene of his ambition indeed, but playing Richmond instead of Richard, Macduff instead of Macbeth. Joe, however, will work his way up, and in the mean time Ben fills his abdicated throne with eminent ability.

Jem Eusden, his quondom rival, is lost to the cricket ground altogether. He is gone forth to see the world. An uncle of his mother's, a broker by profession, resident in Shoe Lane, came into this neighbourhood to attend a great auction, and was so caught by Jem's scholarship that he carried him off to London and placed him with a hosier in Cheapside, where he is to this hour engaged in tying up gloves and stockings, and carrying out parcels. His grand-uncle describes him as much improved by the removal; and his own letters to Ben (for since they have been parted they are become great friends) confirm the assertion. He writes by every opportunity, full as often, I should think, as once a quarter: and his letters give by far the best accounts of the Lord Mayor's day, as well as of the dwarfs, giants, and other monsters on show in London, of any that arrive in these parts. He is critical on the Christmas Pantomimes, descriptive on the Panoramas, and his narrative of the death of the elephant (whose remains his good kinsman the broker took him to visit) was so pathetic that it made the whole village cry. All the common is in admiration of Jem's genius, always excepting his friend Ben Kirby, who laughs at every thing, even his correspondent's letters, and hath been heard to insinuate that the most eloquent morceaux are "bits out of newspapers." Ben is a shrewd wag and knowing; but in this instance I think he is mistaken. I hold Jem's flights for original, and suspect that the young gentleman will turn out literary.

THE TENANTS OF BEECHGROVE.

Those who live in a thickly inhabited, and very pretty country, close to a large town, within a morning's ride of London, and an easy distance from Bath or Cheltenham and the sea, must lay their account, (especially if there be also excellent roads, and a capital pack of fox-hounds) on some of the evils which are generally found to counterbalance so many conveniences; such as a most unusual dearness and scarcity of milk, cream, butter, eggs, and poultry—luxuries held proper to rural life, —a general corruption of domestics,—and, above all, a perpetual change and fluctuation of neighbours. The people of the higher class in this neighbourhood, are as mutable as the six-months denizens of Richmond, or Hampstead—mere birds of passage, who, "come like shadows, so depart." If a resident of ten years ago, were, by any chance, to come here now, he would be in great luck if he found three faces of gentility that he could recognise. I do not mean to insinuate that faces in our parts wax old or ugly sooner than elsewhere; but, simply, that they do not stay amongst us long enough to become old—that one after another, they vanish. All our mansions are let, or to be let. The old manorial Hall, where squire succeeded to squire from generation to generation, is cut down into a villa, or a hunting-lodge, and transferred season after season, from tenant to tenant, with as little remorse as if it were a lodging-house at Brighton. The lords of the soil are almost as universally absentees as if our fair country were part and parcel of the Sister Kingdom. The spirit of migration possesses the land. Nobody of any note even talks of staying amongst us, that I have heard—except a speculating candidate for the next borough; and he is said to have given pretty intelligible hints that he shall certainly be off, unless he be elected. In short, we H——shire people are a generation of runaways.

As "out of evil cometh good," one pleasant consequence of this incessant mutation has been the absence of that sort of prying and observation of which country neighbours used to be accused. No street even in London was freer from small gossiping. With us, they who were moving or thinking of moving, had something else to do: and we, the few dull laggards, who remained fixed in our places, as stationary as directing-posts, and pretty nearly as useless, were too much accustomed to the whirl, to take any great note of the passers-by.

Yet, even amidst the general flitting, one abode gradually forced itself into notice, for the unrivalled rapidity of succession, with which tenant followed tenant,—the most admired and the most changeable of all. It was an exceedingly pretty inconvenient cottage, a picture of a place,—with its French windows and verandahs, its trellis and porch covered with clematis and jessamine, its baby-house conservatory, and its miniature lawn. It was situated in the midst of woody, winding lanes, lost as it were in the labyrinths of our rich and intricate country; with an open grove of

noble beeches on one side of it, and a clear stream crossed by a winding bridge, on the other.

In short, Beechgrove, with all its pretty rusticities, its violets and primroses, and nightingales and turtle-doves, was the very place in which to spend the honeymoon. It seemed a spot made expressly for brides and bridegrooms, doomed by the inexorable laws of fashion, to four weeks of connubial felicity, to get creditably weary of solitude and of each other.

Accordingly, couple after couple repaired to Beechgrove. The very postilions, whether from south or north, east or west, knew instinctively, where to deposit a new-married pair. There was not so pretty a dovecote within twenty miles. Here they came in quick succession, and we had great amusement in watching them. A bridal party is generally very pleasant to look at,—all white satin, and white lace, and white favours, and finery and gaiety! one likes every thing about it: the horses so sleek and prancing: the carriages so ostentatiously new and grand; the servants so full of conscious importance, parading and bustling, as proud of their master's splendour, as if they belonged to a Sheriff on Lord Mayor's day, or to a winning candidate at an election time! Well! they came, and they went,—the fashionable, the titled, the wealthy, and the plain, glad, as it seemed, to come, and certainly glad to go. One couple only remained a little beyond the allotted time. (N. B. that bride was remarkably pretty.) They lingered on; she was charmed with Beechgrove, and they talked of wintering there, and re-engaged the house. But I don't know how it was; she was a sweet pretty woman to be sure, but did not look over-wise; and it happened to her as to Cowley's Beauty in his "Chronicle," her reign was short—

> "One month, three days, and half an hour
> Judith held the sovereign power."

Her husband whisked her off to Paris at the end of five weeks.

They were succeeded by a man in the prime of life, and a woman in its very morning; an elegant but most melancholy pair, who brought with them no bridal favours, no gay carriages, no proud servants, no titles, no name. He was of a person splendidly beautiful—tall, stately, commanding; of a regality of port, and a haughtiness of aspect almost defying, as if expecting inquiry and determined to look it down. It was only when gazing at his fair companion, that his bright eye softened, and his demeanour changed into the most gentle expression of tenderness and submission. He appeared devoted to her; and would read to her on the lawn, ride with her, or drive her in a little open chaise for hours together. She, on the other hand, although receiving his attentions with unalterable sweetness, seemed best pleased to glide away alone, given up to her own thoughts,—sad thoughts, alas! I fear they were!—to her cheerless prospects and mournful recollections. She would walk with her bonnet in her hand, and her beautiful curls put back from her white temples, as if air were necessary to still their throbbing,—and she would so sigh! Poor thing! poor thing! once she came to church, closely veiled, downcast, and trembling. She had forgotten the key of her own pew, and was invited by the vicar's lady into hers. And she went in, and knelt in the lowest place, and sate out great part of the service. But the sermon was affecting; it spake of female frailty; of the woman taken in adultery; of sin and of forgiveness. She could not bear it, and left the church. She never entered it afterwards. Poor thing! guilt was there, but shame and repentance were there also. She was born for better things: and shrank from the eye as if looks were swords.

Without any intention of watching this lovely downcast penitent—for most lovely she was!—it so happened that I met her frequently; and although we never spoke, she grew so familiarized to my passing her in the lanes, as not to start and tremble at my appearance, like a fluttered dove,—as was usual with her, on the sight of strangers. She would even stop to fondle my greyhound, Mayflower, who, with the extraordinary instinct of her kind, had been attracted by her sweet countenance, and never failed to accost her. May and she were quite acquainted; and she had even learnt her name. We used to meet almost every day; especially in one spot, which soon became as much her favourite, as it had long been mine.

About half a mile to the right of Beechgrove, a shady lane leads to a beautiful patch of woodland scenery,—the lingering remains of an ancient chase. Turfy sheep-walks intersect thick brakes of fern and holly, mingled with rich old thorns, and the light feathery birch, and surmounted by noble oaks and beeches, the growth of centuries. In one of the recesses of the wood, just opposite the deep clear pond, which lets the light so finely into this forest picture, stands a real cottage, rough, rude, irregular, mis-shapen; with its hedged-in garden, and its well-stocked orchard; all evidently cribbed in from the waste, and sufficiently spacious to give an air of unusual comfort to the rural dwelling. The cart-shed, too, and the fagot-pile, and the old horse grazing before the door, indicate a considerable portion of rustic prosperity.

In fact they are a thriving family. Charles North, the head of the house, is a jobbing gardener, whose services are in such request, that they are accorded somewhat in the manner of favours, and must be bespoken as long beforehand as the attendance of a first singer at a

musical party. He is a fine athletic man, whose firm upright form, and bold, hale, lively visage contrast rather strangely with the premature grey locks that hang around the latter. In manner, he is singularly agreeable, full of shrewdness and good humour, very merry, and a little arch: perceiving, instantly, the weaknesses of those with whom he converses, and humouring them as much from pliability of temper, and a natural sympathy, as from views of interest. The rogue is my factotum; and sees at a glance which hyacinth to prefer, and which geranium to admire. Good gardener as he is, I doubt if this be not the great secret of Charles North's popularity. Popular he is, that is certain; perhaps the most popular person of my acquaintance: quite good enough to please the wise, and not too good to alarm the gay; for the rest, an excellent husband and excellent father, a thoroughly sober and industrious man, except now and then an outbreak at tide-times, which commonly lasts for a day or two, and leaves him more ardently laborious than ever. One of the most enviable persons whom I have ever encountered, is Charles North in his blue apron.

He however is very seldom seen at his pleasant home. He trudges forth, whistling, at four o'clock every morning, and comes back, still whistling, about seven at night. The cottage at the wood-side is quite populous enough without him. To say nothing of his ailing wife, who is what in a lady would be called nervous; there were, at the time of which I speak, thirteen goodly children, from twenty years old to eight months. Shall I give a catalogue? — Yes. First, an eldest son, a baker, (for one of the protuberances which make the dwelling so picturesque, is a huge oven) Charles North, junior,—tall and vigorous as his father,—a staid sober youth, who, by dint of the small-pox and a miraculous gravity, might pass for the father of the family himself. Then an eldest sister, stout and steady; a home-keeping Martha North, acting as regent during her mother's illnesses, which know no pause; deputy mistress and deputy servant of the whole house. Then a fine open-countenanced girl, her father in petticoats, parcel pickle, and parcel coquette,—who puts her hair in curl-papers, and flirts with one half of the parish, and romps with the other, as she carries her brother's bread round the country, —sole driver of the old white horse: we have not a prettier black-eyed lass in the village than Sally North. Then Tom, who goes to work with his father, and is, at a word, Sally in breeches. Then there were four or five urchins, names unknown, who attended Sunday seminaries, some for charity, some for pay. Then three or four others, sex unknown, imps in tattered frocks, dirty, noisy, healthy, and happy, who dabbled by the side of the pond with the ducks and geese, or helped the pigs to find acorns in the wood. Last of all, the baby,—a rosy smiling brat, clean amidst all the dirt, and placid amidst all the uproar, who lived out of doors, like a gipsy, and might be seen in its little pink frock, stretching its round hardy limbs on the turf, or sitting in infantine state with its back propped against a tree, from morning to night, the general pet and plaything of the family.

This infant was evidently the attraction which drew the fair tenant of Beechgrove to this secluded spot. May and I used to dive into the recesses of the wood, scenery where you may almost realize the delicious creations of "Comus," and "As You Like It;" but *she* always paused at the cottage, always as near as possible to the baby. It was a child that, for mere childish beauty, would have been remarked amongst thousands. The square vigorous form; the dimpled hands and feet, and elbows, so firm, so mottled, of so pure a carnation; the fair open forehead, with little rings of brown hair curling round it; the large bright blue eye; the delicate features; and the sweet look of content, the passionlesss composure, which give a dignity to infant loveliness, would have made Mary North a model for Sir Joshua. No one ever passed without admiring the child, but on no one did her beauty produce such an effect as on this unhappy lady. She could not pass: she seemed to intend it sometimes; but always stopped, and returned to her old station near the cottage.

Her object was, evidently, Mary. At first, she tried to talk to Mrs. North, to Martha, to the little ones that dabbled round the pond; but the effort was visibly painful; and she soon desisted from it; content to hang over the little girl, or sit on the grass by her side, sometimes crying, sometimes with a heart-broken look, as if her tears were gone. The child's name, if accidentally pronounced, always occasioned a convulsive shuddering; and one day, Mrs. North, unable to resist the curiosity excited by these extraordinary proceedings, said to her, "I fancy, ma'am, for so young as you look, that you must have had a little Mary of your own!"—"Once," was the answer, with a burst of bitter grief, "once!" "It's a sad affliction," pursued Mrs. North, "to bury a baby, especially the first. I lost mine, poor innocent! but I have thought, since, how much happier she is than my Mary would be, if I was to die now, and leave her motherless in the wide world." "Oh my Mary! my Mary! my child! my child!" cried the unhappy lady, and fell to the ground in strong and obstinate convulsive fits.

She was conveyed home; and came no more to the cottage by the wood-side. In a few days, Beechgrove was again vacant, and she was gone; leaving for Mrs. North a little green purse containing eighteen guineas, and some silver, and a small slip of paper on which was written, "For your Mary, from a mother

who *left* her child!"—Poor thing! poor thing! we have never heard of her since.

Mary North is now a rosy prattler, the life and joy of her humble home, the loveliest and gayest creature that ever lived. But, better than playing with her doll, better even than base-ball, or sliding or romping, does she like to creep of an evening to her father's knee, and look at the well-hoarded purse, (not a shilling has been taken out,) and gaze, with a mysterious feeling of awe at her little heart, on the slip of uneven writing; and hear, for the hundredth time, the story of the poor lady who was so good to Mary when she was a baby,—the beautiful lady of Beechgrove.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

THE FRENCH TEACHER.

It is now more than twenty years since I, a petted child of ten years old, born and bred in the country, and as shy as a hare, was sent to that scene of bustle and confusion, a London school. O what a change it was! What a terrible change! The good old nurse, and the sweet gentle mamma, and the dear, dear papa, who in their several ways seemed to have no other object than that of spoiling me from morning to night,—to leave them and my own dear home for this strange new place, and these strange new people,—what a change! And so many of them! and children too! Men and women I could have endured: but I had been a solitary child, and hated nothing so much as the din, the laughter, the shrill voices, and rapid motions of children. They fairly made me dizzy. I shall never forget the misery of the first two days, blushing to be looked at, dreading to be spoken to, shrinking like a sensitive plant from the touch, ashamed to cry, and feeling as if I never could laugh again. I was broken-hearted. These disconsolate feelings are not astonishing, even in recollection: the wonder is, that they so soon passed away. But every body was good and kind. There was just attention enough from the heads of the house, and a merciful neglect from the pupils. In less than a week the poor wild bird was tamed. I could look without fear on the bright happy faces; listen without starting to the clear high voices, even though they talked in French; began to watch the ball and the battledore; and felt something like an inclination to join in the sports. In short I soon became an efficient member of the commonwealth; as efficient as a quiet little girl of ten years old could be; made a friend, provided myself with a school-mother, a fine tall blooming girl, who, having attained the dignity of the first class and the mature age of fourteen, already thought herself a young woman, under whose powerful protection I began to learn and unlearn, to acquire the habits and enter into the views of my companions, as well disposed to be idle as the best of them.

Nobody was less thought of in this respectable school than our respectable governess. She seldom came near us. Her post was to sit all day, nicely dressed, in a nicely furnished drawing-room, busy with some piece of delicate needle-work, receiving mammas, aunts, and godmammas, answering questions, and administering as much praise as she conscientiously could,—perhaps a little more. In the school-room she ruled, like other rulers, by ministers and delegates, of whom the French Teacher was the principal. When I first arrived, this high post was filled by the daughter of an *emigré* of distinction, a gentle drooping creature, who looked downward like a columbine, and was totally unequal to contend with twenty light-hearted and boisterous girls. She was the prettiest piece of melancholy that I have ever seen; as pale as alabaster, with large black eyes, that seemed made for tears, and a voice "far above singing." I do not think she could chide; she did not know how. Nobody could help loving a creature so mild and inoffensive; and there was something, with this gentleness, of purity and dignity, that ensured our respect—it clung to her like a garment. She did her duty scrupulously, as far as instruction went, but left all other cares to the English Teacher,—a very different person, coarse and common as could be; a better sort of nursery maid; one who from pure laziness would rather do things herself than take the trouble to see that they were done by another. Under her fosterage our evil habits throve apace: she put away, and hid, and lied for us, till we became the most irregular and untidy generation that ever trod the floor of a school-room. All seemed fair in the sight of the governess; and, whilst our drooping lily Mademoiselle L. remained, all was quiet. But these happy days could not last long. She left us in the short peace of Amiens to join her parents in an attempt to recover some part of their property, in which, I am happy to say, she was successful; whilst with her unlucky pupils the reign of king Log was succeeded by that of king Stork. The new French Teacher came; a tall, majestic woman, between sixty and seventy, made taller by yellow slippers with long slender heels, such as I have never seen before or since. I cannot imagine how she could walk in them, though her way of moving scarcely deserved the name. Her mode of entering a room, or saluting a person, "*son abord*," as she called it, was a trip, a sort of quick mincing shuffle, ending in a low curtsy: her common motion was that of a snake, or a ghost, or her own long train, gliding quite inaudibly, in spite of her heels, whether on the Turkey carpet of the library, or the bare boards

of the dancing-room. Her face was almost invisible, being concealed between a mannish kind of neckcloth, that tied in her chin, and an enormous cap, whose wide flaunting strip hung over her cheeks and eyes,—to say nothing of a huge pair of spectacles. What could be seen of the face was in a fine Roman style of beauty that answered to her figure; beautiful, in spite of age, and cap-strip, and neckcloth, and spectacles; lady-like, in spite of the high heels, the trip, the mantua-making vulgarity of scissors and pincushion dangling outside of her gown, and such a pair of panniers within as have seldom been seen in these degenerate days of reticules and work-bags. Such was the outward woman of Madame. Her inner qualities were speedily developed. We soon found that like "Goose Gibbie," she kept the hours of her flock; went to bed at nine o'clock, and rose at six; and, instead of trying to lose the sight and sound of children in books and drawings, and running away from the very thoughts of us the moment school-hours were over, as poor Mademoiselle L. used to do, Madame was content to keep us company all the day long; was never tired of us, tiresome as we were; and made no other difference between school-time and play-time than that of exchanging scolding for talking, long lessons for long stories. She superintended our sports; watched over the games of ball and battledore; reprimanded the awkward and the noisy; and finally insisted on translating our old forfeits of "Peter Piper," and "I love my love with an A," into their Gallic counterpart, "*Qui veut vendre le corbillon?*"

This was sufficiently irksome; but the worst was to come. Madame, all Parisian though she was, had the fidgety neatness of a Dutch-woman, and was scandalized at our untidy habits. Four days passed in distant murmurs; an exercise book, found, to use her favourite word, "*trainant*" about the room, was thrown into the fire, and a skipping-rope, which nearly overset her by entangling in her train, was tossed out of the window: but this was only the gathering of the wind before the storm. It was dancing-day; we were all dressed and assembled, when Madame, provoked by some indication of latent disorder, some stray pinafore or pocket-handkerchief peeping from under the form that was meant to conceal it, instituted, much to our consternation, a general rummage through the house for things out of their places, which certainly comprised the larger half of our possessions. Every hole and corner were searched for contraband goods, and the collected mass thrown together in one stupendous pile in the middle of the school-room; a pile that defies description or analysis. Bonnets, old and new, with strings and without, pelisses, tippets, parasols, unmatched shoes, halves of pairs of gloves, books tattered or whole, music in many parts, pincushions, petticoats, thimbles, frocks, sashes, dolls, portfolios, shuttlecocks, play-things, work-things, trumpery without end. The entire mass was to be apportioned amongst the different owners and then affixed to their persons, after the manner of some of Mr. Lancaster's punishments, though, to do Madame justice, the design, under her management, was altogether French. She had generously taken the most difficult part herself, and was much in the situation of the Princess in the Fairy Tale, who was put into a great hall full of feathers, and ordered to select from the mingled heap those which belonged to every separate bird. Poor Madame! she was worse off than the princess—she had no good Genius to help her—she did not even know the plumage of her little birds—sad refractory birds as ever beat their wings against a cage. Poor Madame! Article after article was fished up from the mass, and held out to be owned in vain; not a soul would claim such dangerous property: gloves looked about for hands to wear them; slippers were like the famous glass one, and fitted nobody; bonnets wanted heads; dolls went a-begging. Poor Madame! Even when she found a name, it did her little service; she had, to be sure, in ten years picked up some ten words of English,—but proper names! she never came so near them in her life as old Bassompierre when he wrote Innimthorpe for Kensington. Even if she made a distant approach to the sounds in pronunciation, she would never have recognised them when written; it was two to one against her hitting on the initial letter. Nevertheless she did succeed, by dint of lucky guesses and questions which could not be parried, in apportioning quite sufficient to form a style of decoration more novel than elegant,—an order of demerit. Dictionaries suspended from the neck *en medaillon*, shawls tied round the waist *en ceinture*, unbound music pinned to the frock *en queue*, formed a slight part of our adornment; not one of us but had three or four of these appendages; many had five or six. These preparations were intended to meet the eye of Madame's countryman, the French dancing-master, who would doubtless assist in supporting her authority, and in making us thoroughly ashamed. She did not know that before his arrival we were to pass an hour in an exercise of another kind, standing on one leg like geese upon a common, or facing to right and left, under the command of a drill-sergeant. The man of scarlet was ushered in; and it is difficult to say whether the professor of marching or the improver of discipline looked most astonished: the culprits, I am afraid, supported by numbers and amused by the ridiculous appearance of their corps, were not so much disconcerted as they should have been. Madame began a very voluble explanatory harangue; but she was again unfortunate,—the sergeant did not understand French.

She attempted to translate—"It is, Sare, que ces dames, dat dese Miss be des traineuses." This clear and intelligible sentence producing no other visible effect than a shake of the head, Madame desired the nearest culprit to tell "*ce soldat là*" what she had said, and to inform her what he could possibly be come for. Our interpreter was puzzled in her turn, as much puzzled as Pistol's boy when bidden to construe "fer ferret and firk" to Monsieur le Fer. She had to find English for *traineuses* (no dictionary word! I believe Madame invented it expressly for our use,) and French for drill-sergeant. She got through her difficulties vastly well, called him of the red coat a walking-master, and confessed frankly that we were in disgrace. The sergeant was a man of bowels; besides he hated the French; he declared that "it made his blood boil to see so many free-born English girls domineered over by a natural enemy," and as he said this he eyed poor Madame as fiercely as if she had been a member of the Legion of Honour: finally he insisted that we could not march with such incumbrances; which declaration being done into French all at once by half a dozen eager tongues, the trappings were removed, and the experiment ended without any very sensible improvement.

Inauspicious as the beginning was, in a short time we did improve; our habits became more regular, we began to feel the comfort of order, and we began to like Madame. She lived with us and for us, like a family nurse, or a good old grandmamma (only that she did not spoil us)—she had no other occupation, no other thought, scarcely another friend in the world; and she had herself an aptness to love which could not fail to attach young hearts. It was touching to see that respectable woman homeless and desolate in her old age, clinging to children for society and comfort, joining in their pursuits and amusements, and bringing down her own thoughts and feelings to their comprehension. Her youth of mind and simplicity of heart kept her happy: I doubt whether grown people would have suited her so well. She entered thoroughly and heartily into our little schemes, and had more of her own than all the school put together. Never found mortal such pleasure in small surprises, innocent secrets, and mysterious gifts. Cherries dropped in our path like fairy favours; sweetpeas and mignionette springing up as if by magic in our little gardens; purses netted under the table and smuggled into our pockets no one knew how; birth-day *fêtes* gotten up as secretly as state conspiracies—these were her delights. She was cross sometimes, and strict enough always; but we loved Madame, and Madame loved us. I really think she would have been one of the happiest creatures in the world, but for a strange aversion which she unluckily took to a very charming young lady, a woman of genius and a poetess, who succeeded to the functions of the stupid English Teacher. The dislike was mutual. Never were two better haters. Their relative situation had probably something to do with it; and yet it was wonderful that two such excellent persons should so thoroughly detest each other. Miss R.'s aversion was of the cold, phlegmatic, contemptuous, provoking sort; she kept aloof and said nothing: Madame's was acute, fiery, and loquacious; she not only hated Miss R., but hated for her sake knowledge, and literature, and wit, and, above all, poetry, which she denounced as something fatal and contagious, like the plague. I shall never forget her horror when she detected one of her favourites in the act of translating a stanza of Tasso into something that looked like verse; if she had caught her committing forgery, her lamentations could not have been more indignantly pathetic. What would she say now?

I have already mentioned with honour Madame's high heels. They were once put to an unexpected use. She had been ill, and had gone into lodgings on the other side of London, to be near her favourite physician. We soon found a relaxation of discipline; our poetess piqued herself upon managing us in a different way from her rival (she never suspected that we managed her); besides which she had a most comfortable habit of abstraction, and seldom saw what passed before her eyes. The business of the school went on as usual: but our amusements were left to ourselves, and a dramatic fury raged high amongst us. Our first performance was Pizarro, that delight of children. In this choice we had one trifling difficulty, the absence of the printed play; but most of the actors had seen the piece, and we managed it by memory and invention. I should like to see a variorum edition of our Pizarro. The Spanish hero himself had never seen the tragedy; but he was a very clever little Irish girl, not more than a foot shorter than Elvira, and, being well instructed in the spirit of the part, blustered through the tyrant very creditably, excepting one mistake, that of regularly ordering the soldiers to shoot Rolla three scenes before his time. The error was pardonable. Every body sympathised with Pizarro in thinking the sooner Rolla was out of pain the better. His sufferings were exquisite. He was a fine well grown personable girl, but labouring under such a melancholy want of words and ideas, that he felt and inflicted in a higher degree the sort of distress which is so often caused by stammering; we could no more prevail on him to relinquish his impracticable part, than a stammerer can be persuaded to abandon the unutterable word. Elvira we chose for her especial gift in scolding, her natural shrewishness; and she did not disappoint us; she acted like a virago born, the

pride and glory of the play. As to Cora, I did her myself, after an exceedingly original fashion. I recollect one trait. I did not like going mad; it was troublesome, and I did not well know how to go about it,—fainting was much easier; so I fainted, and had the pleasure of being pulled by the arms across the room, with my heels dragging along the floor, by one of our stage footmen; an operation in which I found so much amusement, that I got a part of the audience (the little girls, the demure and the stupid,) to encore my swoon.

Our next performance was Feudal Times, induced by the mistake of a silly maid, who had smuggled that pageant into the house instead of Pizarro. We performed this entertainment to the letter, only leaving out the songs, the scenery, and the processions. Altogether Feudal Times did not go off like Pizarro; the zest of suspense and unexpectedness was wanting; every body knew what was to come next; no delightful blunders, no happy mistakes, no tragedy in our comedy, and far too little comedy in our tragedy; it was as dull as a lesson, and the run would have been short. We had already begun to turn our attention to a stray copy of Deaf and Dumb, when an unlucky accident put an entire stop to our dramatic career. In the melancholy of Feudal Times one part seemed indispensable to the story. The heroine, a lady Claribel, is picked up out of a moat by a certain fisherman called Walter, into which moat she had been precipitated by the same Walter's sawing asunder a draw-bridge, which her oppressor, the baron, was defending against her lover. This we contrived almost as notably as the wall and moonshine were managed in Bottom's play, by tying together two long high forms, which Walter, seated tailor-fashion in a short low form, turned topsy-turvy, to resemble a boat, divided with a knife, catching hold, at the same time, of the lady Claribel, and pushing off with her to her lover, who stood on the chalked line, which we called the bank. Four afternoons was this manœuvre adroitly performed: on the fifth, an over-eager combatant lost his balance, and fell over just as the bridge was sawing asunder; in falling he caught at the baron's white frock, who, overset in his turn, clung to the bridge, and down they came, vassal, baron, and bridge, together with the fair lady Claribel, full on the unlucky boat and the unfortunate boatman. The crash was tremendous. An universal scream from actors and spectators soon brought Miss R. to the scene, and disturbed the tranquil course of Mrs. ***'s embroidery. The mischief was less than might have been expected; a few bruises, one broken form, and two torn frocks; but the fright, the din, and the clatter, made too deep an impression to be overcome; the drama was instantly proscribed, Feudal Times thrown on the fire, and Deaf and Dumb put under lock and key.

When once, however, the theatrical fever is thoroughly excited, it is not easily allayed, especially if heightened by a prohibition. We were just on the point of actual rebellion, and had contrived a plot for regaining Deaf and Dumb, when a turn was given to our ideas by one of the confederates going to the opera, and coming back with her head full of a Scottish divertisement and the ballet of Orpheus and Eurydice. We hesitated a long time which to choose; to have one we were determined. A ballet is not a play; there was no edict against dancing; and as the Grecian and Scottish parties ran high, we boldly resolved to blend the two stories into one. "Rather improbable, to be sure," said our manager, "but not impossible. No reason on earth why Orpheus might not go to Scotland in search of Eurydice; we must make that understood in the bills. The ballet will be quite as intelligible one way as the other." Quite. The union of twenty plots would not have puzzled our ballet mistress; the confusion of her brain defied increase. I cannot attempt a minute detail of our performance. Venus—for we enlisted the whole corps of gods and goddesses in our service—Venus, a black-haired brown gipsy, rather quick-witted than beautiful, slid about in a pasteboard car, which she pushed forward much as a child manages a go-cart, driving cruelly over her paper doves, and stooping every moment to pick them up and set them flying again. Cupid, the *ci-devant* Pizarro, was the charm of the piece, full of grace and playfulness: he managed his shining wings with great address, and his bow and arrows still better. One of his feats was the demolition of a pasteboard fortress, which we had erected across one corner of the room, just large enough to contain the Scottish heroine, and ingeniously contrived to keep together by strings held in her hand, which she dropped as soon as cupid drew his bow, and sprang away from her prison. This piece of machinery was our principal attempt in that line; but we had made great advances in costume since the luckless night when the baron was brought to the ground by a pull at his white frock. Our highland lasses had muslin aprons bound with tartan ribands, the right Highland dress of the Opera House; Jupiter had a rich pelisse; and Pluto a beard—a fine tuft of bear-skin, docked by our manager from her own fur tippet. This conscious splendour inspired us with a desire for a more numerous audience. We invited two or three young ladies of the neighbourhood, who came to take lessons in dancing; Miss R., too, we asked, the parlour boarders, and the good old house-keeper. The evening arrived, the spectators were seated, unexpectedly reinforced by Mrs. ***, in high good humour; and we danced on in triumphant confusion, till we came to the grand scene of the infernal regions. We had been at some loss as to the management of the classical

Hell. Even our undoubting manager was posed. Fire seemed to our simple apprehensions a necessary element. The furies must have torches. No dispensing with that engine of horror. Accordingly we erected a sort of artificial rock-work, composed of tables, stools, and trunks of unequal height, over which was flung a large covering of canvass. Towards the centre of this machine we placed a saucer full of burning spirits of wine, emitting much such a flame as I have seen issue at Christmas from a minced-pie floated with burning brandy. Our orchestra was playing "The Soldier Tired;" the whole dramatis personæ, gods and mortals, Greeks and Scots, were assembled on the stage; Orpheus was casting his memorable look back on Eurydice; and the furies were lighting their torches at the blazing spirits—when the folding doors flew back, and Madame appeared in the opening, muffled in white drapery, motionless for a moment, and then glided gently in, like another Castle Spectre. One of the Furies, in astonishment at this apparition, dropped her torch, and set fire to the canvass-covering, just as Madame reached the rock-work. The flame caught her eye, and she dexterously whisked off her yellow slipper, and tapped out the fire with its slender heel. I still seem to hear the quick clear sound of those taps. She then gracefully resumed her shoe and her tripping motion, and glided up to Mrs. ***, with her usual mincing pace. So ended our ballet. We crowded round our dear old friend, and thought no more of Orpheus and Eurydice.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE COPSE.

April 18th.—Sad wintry weather; a north-east wind; a sun that puts out one's eyes, without affording the slightest warmth; dryness that chaps lips and hands like a frost in December; rain that comes chilling and arrowy like hail in January; nature at a dead pause; no seeds up in the garden; no leaves out in the hedge-rows; no cowslips swinging their pretty bells in the fields; no nightingales in the dingles; no swallows skimming round the great pond; no cuckoos (that ever I should miss that rascally sonnetteer!) in any part! Nevertheless there is something of a charm in this wintery spring, this putting-back of the seasons. If the flower-clock must stand still for a month or two, could it choose a better time than that of the primroses and violets? I never remember (and for such gauds my memory, if not very good for aught of wise or useful, may be trusted) such an affluence of the one or such a duration of the other. Primrosy is the epithet which this year will retain in my recollection. Hedge, ditch, meadow, field, even the very paths and highways, are set with them; but the chief *habitat* is a certain copse, about a mile off, where they are spread like a carpet, and where I go to visit them rather oftener than quite comports with the dignity of a lady of mature age. I am going thither this very afternoon, and May and her company are going too.

This Mayflower of mine is a strange animal. Instinct and imitation make in her an approach to reason which is sometimes almost startling. She mimics all that she sees us do, with the dexterity of a monkey and far more of gravity and apparent purpose; cracks nuts and eats them; gathers currants and severs them from the stalk with the most delicate nicety; filches and munches apples and pears, is as dangerous in an orchard as a school-boy; smells to flowers; smiles at meeting; answers in a pretty lively voice when spoken to, (sad pity that the language should be unknown!) and has greatly the advantage of us in a conversation, inasmuch as our meaning is certainly clear to her;—all this and a thousand amusing prettinesses, (to say nothing of her canine feat of bringing her game straight to her master's feet, and refusing to resign it to any hand but his) does my beautiful greyhound perform untaught, by the mere effect of imitation and sagacity. Well, May, at the end of the coursing season, having lost Brush, our old spaniel, her great friend, and the blue greyhound Mariette, her comrade and rival, both of which four-footed worthies were sent out to keep for the summer, began to find solitude a weary condition, and to look abroad for company. Now it so happened that the same suspension of sport which had reduced our little establishment from three dogs to one, had also dispersed the splendid kennel of a celebrated courser in our neighbourhood, three of whose finest young dogs came home to "their walk" (as the sporting phrase goes) at the collar-maker's in our village. May, accordingly, on the first morning of her solitude (she had never taken the slightest notice of her neighbours before, although they had sojourned in our street upwards of a fortnight,) bethought herself of the timely resource offered to her by the vicinity of these canine *beaux*, and went up boldly and knocked at their stable door, which was already very commodiously on the half-latch. The three dogs came out with much alertness and gallantry, and May, declining apparently to enter their territories, brought them off to her own. This manœuvre has been repeated every day, with one variation; of the three dogs, the first a brindle, the second a yellow, and the third a black, the two first only are now admitted to walk or consort with her, and the last, poor fellow, for no fault that I can discover, except May's caprice, is driven away, not only by the fair lady, but even by his old companions

—is, so to say, sent to Coventry. Of her two permitted followers, the yellow gentleman, Saladin by name, is decidedly the favourite. He is, indeed, May's shadow, and will walk with me whether I choose or not. It is quite impossible to get rid of him unless by discarding Miss May also;—and to accomplish a walk in the country without her, would be like an adventure of Don Quixote without his faithful 'squire Sancho.

So forth we set, May and I, and Saladin and the brindle; May and myself walking with the sedateness and decorum befitting our sex and age (she is five years old this grass, rising six)—the young things, for the soldan and the brindle are (not meaning any disrespect) little better than puppies, frisking and frolicking as best pleased them.

Our route lay for the first part along the sheltered quiet lanes which led to our old habitation; a way never trodden by me without peculiar and home-like feelings, full of the recollections, the pains, and pleasures of other days. But we are not to talk sentiment now;—even May would not understand that maudlin language. We must go on. What a wintery hedge-row this is for the eighteenth of April! Primrosy to be sure, abundantly spangled with those stars of the earth,—but so bare, so leafless, so cold! The wind whistles through the brown boughs as in winter. Even the early elder shoots, which do make an approach to springiness, look brown, and the small leaves of the woodbine, which have also ventured to peep forth, are of a sad purple, frost-bitten, like a dairy-maid's elbows on a snowy morning. The very birds in this season of pairing and building, look chilly and uncomfortable, and their nests!——"Oh Saladin! come away from the hedge! Don't you see that what puzzles you and makes you leap up in the air is a redbreast's nest? Don't you see the pretty speckled eggs? Don't you hear the poor hen calling as it were for help? Come here this moment, sir!" And by good luck Saladin (who for a paynim has tolerable qualities) comes, before he has touched the nest, or before his playmate the brindle, the less manageable of the two, has espied it.

Now we go round the corner and cross the bridge, where the common, with its clear stream winding between clumps of elms, assumes so park-like an appearance. Who is this approaching so slowly and majestically, this square bundle of petticoat and cloak, this road-wagon of a woman? It is, it must be, Mrs. Sally Mearing, the completest specimen within my knowledge of farmeresses (may I be allowed that innovation in language?) as they were. It can be nobody else.

Mrs. Sally Mearing, when I first became acquainted with her, occupied, together with her father (a superannuated man of ninety,) a large farm very near our former habitation. It had been anciently a great manor-farm, or court-house, and was still a stately substantial building, whose lofty halls and spacious chambers gave an air of grandeur to the common offices to which they were applied. Traces of gilding might yet be seen on the panels which covered the walls, and on the huge carved chimney-pieces, which rose almost to the ceilings; and the marble tables, and the inlaid oak staircase, still spoke of the former grandeur of the court. Mrs. Sally corresponded well with the date of her mansion, although she troubled herself little with its dignity. She was thoroughly of the old school, and had a most comfortable contempt for the new; rose at four in winter and summer, breakfasted at six, dined at eleven in the forenoon, supped at five, and was regularly in bed before eight, except when the hay-time or the harvest imperiously required her to sit up till sunset,—a necessity to which she submitted with no very good grace. To a deviation from these hours, and to the modern iniquities of white aprons, cotton stockings, and muslin handkerchiefs, (Mrs. Sally herself always wore check, black worsted, and a sort of yellow compound which she was wont to call *susy*,) together with the invention of drill plough and threshing machines, and other agricultural novelties, she failed to attribute all the mishaps or misdoings of the whole parish. The last-mentioned discovery, especially, aroused her indignation. Oh to hear her descant on the merits of the flail, wielded by a stout right arm, such as she had known in her youth (for by her account there was as great a deterioration in bones and sinews as in the other implements of husbandry,) was enough to make the very inventor break his machine. She would even take up her favourite instrument, and thresh the air herself, by way of illustrating her argument, and, to say truth, few men in these degenerate days, could have matched the stout brawny muscular limb which Mrs. Sally displayed at sixty-five.

In spite of this contumacious rejection of all agricultural improvements, the world went well with her at Court-farm. A good landlord, an easy rent, incessant labour and unremitting frugality, and excellent times, insured a regular though moderate profit; and she lived on, grumbling and prospering, flourishing and complaining, till two misfortunes befell her at once—her father died, and her lease expired. The loss of her father, although a bedridden man, turned of ninety, who could not in the course of nature, have been expected to live long, was a terrible shock to a daughter, who was not so much younger as to be without fears for her own life, and who had besides been so used to nursing the good old man, and looking to his little comforts, that she missed him as a mother would miss an ailing child. The expiration of the lease was a grievance and a puzzle of a different nature. Her landlord would have willingly

retained his excellent tenant, but not on the terms on which she then held the land, which had not varied for fifty years: so poor Mrs. Sally had the misfortune to find rent rising and prices sinking both at the same moment—a terrible solecism in political economy. Even this, however, I believe she would have endured rather than have quitted the house where she was born, and to which all her ways and notions were adapted, had not a priggish steward, as much addicted to improvement and reform, as she was to precedent and established usages, insisted on binding her by lease to spread a certain number of loads of chalk on every field. This tremendous innovation, for never had that novelty in manure whitened the crofts and pightels of Court-Farm, decided her at once. She threw the proposals into the fire, and left the place in a week.

Her choice of a habitation occasioned some wonder and much amusement in our village world. To be sure, upon the verge of seventy, an old maid may be permitted to dispense with the more rigid punctilio of her class, but Mrs. Sally had always been so tenacious on the score of character, so very a prude, so determined an avoider of the "men folk," (as she was wont contemptuously to call them,) that we were all conscious of something like astonishment, on finding that she and her little handmaid had taken up their abode in the one end of a spacious farm-house belonging to the bluff old bachelor, George Robinson, of the Lea. Now farmer Robinson was quite as notorious for his aversion to petticoated things, as Mrs. Sally for her hatred to the unfeathered bipeds who wear doublet and hose, so that there was a little astonishment in that quarter too, and plenty of jests, which the honest farmer speedily silenced, by telling all who joked on the subject that he had given his lodger fair warning, that, let people say what they would, he was quite determined not to marry her; so that if she had any views that way, it would be better for her to go elsewhere. This declaration, which must be admitted to have been more remarkable for frankness than civility, made, however, no ill impression on Mrs. Sally. To the farmer's she went, and at his house she still lives, with her little maid, her tabby cat, a decrepit sheep-dog, and much of the lumber of Court-Farm, which she could not find in her heart to part from. There she follows her old ways and her old hours, untempted by matrimony, and unassailed (as far as I hear) by love or scandal, with no other grievance than an occasional dearth of employment for herself and her young lass, (even pewter dishes do not always want scouring,) and now and then a twinge of the rheumatism.

Here she is, that good relique of the olden time—for, in spite of her whims and prejudices, a better and a kinder woman never lived—here she is, with the hood of her red cloak pulled over her close black bonnet of that silk which once (it may be presumed) was fashionable, since it is still called mode, and her whole stout figure huddled up in a miscellaneous and most substantial covering of thick petticoats, gowns, aprons, shawls, and cloaks—a weight which it requires the strength of a thresher to walk under—here she is with her square honest visage and her loud frank voice;—and we hold a pleasant disjointed chat of rheumatisms and early chickens, bad weather, and hats with feathers in them;—the last exceedingly sore subject being introduced by poor Jane Davies, (a cousin of Mrs. Sally,) who, passing us in a beaver bonnet on her road from school, stopped to drop her little curtsy, and was soundly scolded for her civility. Jane, who is a gentle, humble, smiling lass, about twelve years old, receives so many rebukes from her worthy relative, and bears them so meekly, that I should not wonder if they were to be followed by a legacy: I sincerely wish they may. Well, at last we said good-bye; when, on inquiring my destination, and hearing that I was bent to the ten-acre copse, (part of the farm which she ruled so long,) she stopped me to tell a dismal story of two sheep-stealers who sixty years ago were found hidden in that copse, and only taken after great difficulty and resistance, and the maiming of a peace-officer. —"Pray don't go there, Miss! For mercy's sake don't be so venturesome! Think if they should kill you!" were the last words of Mrs. Sally.

Many thanks for her care and kindness! But without being at all fool-hardy in general, I have no great fear of the sheep-stealers of sixty years ago. Even if they escaped hanging for that exploit, I should greatly doubt their being in case to attempt another. So on we go: down the short shady lane, and out on the pretty retired green, shut in by fields and hedge-rows, which we must cross to reach the copse. How lively this green nook is to-day, half covered with cows and horses and sheep! And how glad these frolicsome greyhounds are to exchange the hard gravel of the high road for this pleasant short turf, which seems made for their gambols! How beautifully they are at play, chasing each other round and round in lessening circles, darting off at all kinds of angles, crossing and recrossing May, and trying to win her sedateness into a game at romps, turning round on each other with gay defiance, pursuing the cows and the colts, leaping up as if to catch the crows in their flight;—all in their harmless and innocent—"Ah wretches! villains! rascals! four-footed mischiefs! canine plagues! Saladin! Brindle!"—They are after the sheep —"Saladin, I say!"—They have actually singled out that pretty spotted lamb—"Brutes, if I catch you! Saladin, Brindle!"—We shall

be taken up for sheep-stealing presently ourselves. They have chased the poor little lamb into a ditch, and are mounting guard over it, standing at bay—"Ah wretches, I have you now! for shame, Saladin! Get away, Brindle! See how good May is. Off with you, brutes! For shame! For shame!" and brandishing a handkerchief, which could hardly be an efficient instrument of correction, I succeeded in driving away the two puppies, who after all meant nothing more than play, although it was somewhat rough, and rather too much in the style of the old fable of the boys and the frogs. May is gone after them, perhaps to scold them; for she has been as grave as a judge during the whole proceeding, keeping ostentatiously close to me, and taking no part whatever in the mischief.

The poor little pretty lamb! here it lies on the bank quite motionless, frightened I believe to death, for certainly those villains never touched it. It does not stir. Does it breathe? Oh yes, it does! It is alive, safe enough. Look, it opens its eyes, and, finding the coast clear and its enemies far away, it springs up in a moment and gallops to its dam, who has stood bleating the whole time at a most respectful distance. Who would suspect a lamb of so much simple cunning? I really thought the pretty thing was dead—and now how glad the ewe is to recover her curling spotted little one! How fluttered they look! Well! this adventure has flurried me too; between fright and running, I warrant you, my heart beats as fast as the lamb's.

Ah! here is the shameless villain Saladin, the cause of the commotion, thrusting his slender nose into my hand to beg pardon and make up! "Oh wickedest of soldans! Most iniquitous pagan! Soul of a Turk!"—but there is no resisting the good-humoured creature's penitence. I must pat him. "There! there! Now we will go to the copse, I am sure we shall find no worse malefactors than ourselves—shall we, May?—and the sooner we get out of sight of the sheep the better; for Brindle seems meditating another attack. *Allons, messieurs*, over this gate, across this meadow, and here is the copse."

How boldly that superb ash-tree with its fine silver bark rises from the bank, and what a fine entrance it makes with the holly beside it, which also deserves to be called a tree! But here we are in the copse. Ah! only one half of the underwood was cut last year, and the other is at its full growth: hazel, briar, woodbine, bramble, forming one impenetrable thicket, and almost uniting with the lower branches of the elms, and oaks, and beeches, which rise at regular distances over-head. No foot can penetrate that dense and thorny entanglement; but there is a walk all round by the side of the wide sloping bank and copse carpeted with primroses, whose fresh and balmy odour impregnates the very air. Oh how exquisitely beautiful! and it is not the primroses only, those gems of flowers, but the natural mosaic of which they form a part: that net-work of ground ivy, with its lilac blossoms and the subdued tint of its purplish leaves, those rich mosses, those enameled wild hyacinths, those spotted arums, and above all those wreaths of ivy linking all those flowers together with chains of leaves more beautiful than blossoms, whose white veins seem swelling amidst the deep green or splendid brown;—it is the whole earth that is so beautiful. Never surely were primroses so richly set, and never did primroses better deserve such a setting. There they are of their own lovely yellow, the hue to which they have given a name, the exact tint of the butterfly that overhangs them (the first I have seen this year! can spring really be coming at last?)—sprinkled here and there with tufts of a reddish purple, and others of the purest white, as some accident of soil affects that strange and inscrutable operation of nature, the colouring of flowers. Oh how fragrant they are, and how pleasant it is to sit in this sheltered copse, listening to the fine creaking of the wind amongst the branches, the most unearthly of sounds, with this gay tapestry under our feet, and the wood-pigeons flitting from tree to tree, and mixing their deep note of love with the elemental music.

Yes! spring is coming. Wood-pigeons, butterflies, and sweet flowers, all give token of the sweetest of the seasons. Spring is coming. The hazel stalks are swelling and putting forth their pale tassels; the satin palms with their honeyed odours, are out on the willow, and the last lingering winter berries are dropping from the hawthorn, and making way for the bright and blossomy leaves.

THE TOUCHY LADY.

One of the most unhappy persons whom it has been my fortune to encounter, is a pretty woman of thirty, or thereabout, healthy, wealthy, and of good repute, with a fine house, a fine family, and an excellent husband. A solitary calamity renders all these blessings of no avail:—the gentlewoman is touchy. This affliction has given a colour to her whole life. Her biography has a certain martial dignity, like the history of a nation; she dates from battle to battle, and passes her days in an interminable civil war.

The first person who, long before she could speak, had the misfortune to offend the young lady, was her nurse; then in quick succession four nursery maids, who were turned away, poor things! because Miss Anne could not abide them; then her brother Harry, by being born, and diminishing her importance;

then three governesses; then two writing-masters; then one music mistress; then a whole school. On leaving school, affronts multiplied of course; and she has been in a constant miff with servants, tradespeople, relations and friends ever since; so that although really pretty (at least she would be so if it were not for a standing frown and a certain watchful defying look in her eyes,) decidedly clever and accomplished, and particularly charitable, as far as giving money goes, (your ill-tempered woman has often that redeeming grace,) she is known only by her one absorbing quality of touchiness, and is dreaded and hated accordingly by every one who has the honour of her acquaintance.

Paying her a visit is one of the most formidable things that can be imagined, one of the trials which in a small way demand the greatest resolution. It is so difficult to find what to say. You must make up your mind to the affair as you do when going into a shower bath. Differing from her is obviously pulling the string; and agreeing with her too often or too pointedly is nearly as bad: she then suspects you of suspecting her infirmity, of which she has herself a glimmering consciousness, and treats you with a sharp touch of it accordingly. But what is there that she will not suspect? Admire the colours of a new carpet, and she thinks you are looking at some invisible hole; praise the pattern of a morning cap, and she accuses you of thinking it too gay. She has an ingenuity of perverseness which brings all subjects nearly to a level. The mention of her neighbours is evidently *taboo*, since it is at least twenty to one but she is in a state of affront with nine-tenths of them; her own family are also *taboo* for the same reason. Books are particularly unsafe. She stands vibrating on the pinnacle where two fears meet, ready to be suspected of bluestockingism on the one hand, or of ignorance and frivolity on the other, just as the work you may chance to name happens to be recondite or popular; nay sometimes the same production shall excite both feelings. "Have you read Hajji Baba," said I to her one day last winter, "Hajji Baba the Persian"—"Really, Ma'am, I am no orientalist."—"Hajji Baba the clever Persian tale?" continued I, determined not be daunted. "I believe, Miss M." rejoined she, "that you think I have nothing better to do than to read novels." And so she snip-snaps to the end of the visit. Even the Scotch novels, which she does own to reading, are no resource in her desperate case. There we are shipwrecked on the rocks of taste. A difference there is fatal. She takes to those delicious books as personal property, and spreads over them the prickly shield of her protection in the same spirit with which she appropriates her husband and her children; is huffy if you prefer Guy Mannering to the Antiquary, and quite jealous if you presume to praise Jeanie Deans; thus cutting off his Majesty's lieges from the most approved topic of discussion among civilized people, a neutral ground as open and various as the weather, and far more delightful. But what did I say? The very weather is with her no prudent word. She pretends to skill in that science of guesses commonly called weather-wisdom, and a fog, or a shower, or a thunderstorm, or the blessed sun himself, may have been rash enough to contradict her bodements, and put her out of humour for the day.

Her own name has all her life long been a fertile source of misery to this unfortunate lady. Her maiden name was Smythe, Anne Smythe. Now Smythe, although perfectly genteel and unexceptionable to look at, a pattern appellation on paper, was in speaking, no way distinguishable from the thousands of common Smiths who cumber the world. She never heard that "word of fear," especially when introduced to a new acquaintance, without looking as if she longed to spell it. Anne was bad enough; people had housemaids of that name, as if to make a confusion; and her grandmamma insisted on her omitting the final *e*, in which important vowel was seated all it could boast of elegance or dignity; and once a brother of fifteen, the identical brother Harry, an Etonian, a pickle, one of that order of clever boys who seem born for the torment of their female relatives, "foredoomed their *sister's* soul to cross," actually went so far as to call her Nancy! She did not box his ears, although how near her tingling fingers' ends approached to that consummation, it is not my business to tell. Having suffered so much from the perplexity of her equivocal maiden name, she thought herself most lucky in pitching on the thoroughly well-looking and well-sounding appellation of Morley for the rest of her life. Mrs. Morley—nothing could be better. For once there was a word that did not affront her. The first alloy to this satisfaction was her perceiving on the bridal cards, Mr. and Mrs. B. Morley, and hearing that close to their future residence lived a rich bachelor uncle, till whose death that fearful diminution of her consequence, the Mrs. B. must be endured. Mrs. B.! The brow began to wrinkle—but it was the night before the wedding, the uncle had made some compensation for the crime of being born thirty years before his nephew in the shape of a superb set of emeralds, and by a fortunate mistake, she had taken it into her head that B. in the present case, stood for Basil, so that the loss of dignity being compensated by an increase of elegance, she bore the shock pretty well. It was not till the next morning during the ceremony, that the full extent of her misery burst upon her, and she found that B. stood not for Basil, but for Benjamin. Then the veil fell off; then the full horror of her situation, the affront of being a Mrs. Benjamin, stared her full in

the face; and certainly but for the accident of being struck dumb by indignation, she never would have married a man so ignobly christened. Her fate has been even worse than then appeared probable; for her husband, an exceeding popular and convivial person, was known all over his own country by the familiar diminutive of his ill-omened appellation; so that she found herself not merely a Mrs. Benjamin, but a Mrs. Ben., the wife of a Ben Morley, junior, esq. (for the peccant uncle was also godfather and namesake) the future mother of a Ben Morley the third.—Oh the Miss Smith, the Anne, even the Nancy, shrunk into nothing when compared with that short word.

Neither is she altogether free from misfortunes on her side of the house. There is a terrible *mésalliance* in her own family. Her favourite aunt, the widow of an officer with five portionless children, became one fair morning the wife of a rich mercer in Cheapside, thus at a stroke gaining comfort and losing caste. The manner in which this affected poor Mrs. Ben Morley is inconceivable. She talked of the unhappy connection, as aunts are wont to talk when nieces get paired at Gretna Green, wrote a formal renunciation of the culprit, and has considered herself insulted ever since if any one mentions a silk gown in her presence. Another affliction, brought on by her own family, is the production of a farce by her brother Harry, (born for her plague) at Covent Garden Theatre. The farce was damned, as the author (a clever young Templar) declares most deservedly. He bore the catastrophe with great heroism; and celebrated its downfall by venting sundry good puns and drinking an extra bottle of claret; leaving to Anne, sister Anne, the pleasant employment of fuming over his discomfiture—a task which she performed *con amore*. Actors, manager, audience and author, seventeen newspapers and three magazines, had the misfortune to displease her on this occasion; in short the whole town. Theatres and newspapers, critics and the drama, have been banished from her conversation ever since. She would as lieve talk of a silk-mercer.

Next after her visiters, her correspondents are to be pitied; they had need look to their P's and Q's, their spelling and their stationary. If you write a note to her, be sure that the paper is the best double post, hot-pressed, and gilt-edged; that your pen is in good order; that your "dear Madams" have a proper mixture of regard and respect; and that your folding and sealings are unexceptionable. She is of a sort to faint at the absence of an envelope, and to die of a wafer. Note, above all, that your address be perfect; that your *to* be not forgotten; that the offending *Benjamin* be omitted; and that the style and title of her mansion, Shawford Manor House, be set forth in full glory. And when this is achieved, make up your mind to her taking some inexplicable affront after all. Thrice fortunate would he be who could put twenty words together without affronting her. Besides, she is great at a scornful reply, and shall keep up a quarrelling correspondence with any lady in Great Britain. Her letters are like challenges; and but for the protection of the petticoat, she would have fought fifty duels, and have been either killed or quieted long ago.

If her husband had been of her temper, she would have brought him into twenty scrapes, but he is as unlike her as possible: a good-humoured rattling creature, with a perpetual festivity of temper, and a propensity to motion and laughter, and all sorts of merry mischief, like a schoolboy in the holidays, which felicitous personage he resembles bodily in his round ruddy handsome face, his dancing black eyes, curling hair, and light active figure, the youngest man that ever saw forty. His pursuits have the same happy juvenility. In the summer he fishes and plays cricket; in the winter he hunts and courses; and what with grouse and partridges, pheasants and woodcocks, wood-pigeons and flappers, he contrives pretty tolerably to shoot all the year round. Moreover, he attends revels, races, assizes, and quarter-sessions; drives stage-coaches, patronizes plays, is steward to concerts, goes to every dance within forty miles, and talks of standing for the county; so that he has no time to quarrel with his wife, or for her, and affronts her twenty times an hour simply by giving her her own way.

To the popularity of this universal favourite, for the restless sociability of his temper is invaluable in a dull country neighbourhood, his wife certainly owes the toleration which bids fair to render her incorrigible. She is fast approaching to the melancholy condition of a privileged person, one put out of the pale of civilized society. People have left off being angry with her, and begin to shrug up their shoulders and say its her way, a species of placability which only provokes her the more. For my part, I have too great a desire to obtain her good opinion to think of treating her in so shabby a manner; and as it is morally certain that we shall never be friends whilst we visit, I intend to try the effect of non-intercourse, and to break with her outright. If she reads this article, which is very likely, for she is addicted to new publications, and thinks herself injured if a book be put into her hands with the leaves cut,—if she reads only half a page she will inevitably have done with me for ever. If not, there can hardly be any lack of a sufficient quarrel in her company; and then, when we have ceased to speak or to curtsy, and fairly sent each other to Coventry, there can be no reason why we should not be on as civil terms as if the one lived at Calcutta, and the other at New York.

JACK HATCH.

I PIQUE myself on knowing by sight, and by name, almost every man and boy in our parish, from eight years old to eighty—I cannot say quite so much for the women. They —the elder of them at least—are more within doors, more hidden. One does not meet them in the fields and highways; their duties are close housekeepers, and live under cover. The girls, to be sure, are often enough in sight, "true creatures of the element," basking in the sun, racing in the wind, rolling in the dust, dabbling in the water,—hardier, dirtier, noisier, more sturdy defiers of heat and cold, and wet, than boys themselves. One sees them quite often enough to know them; but then the little elves alter so much at every step of their approach to womanhood, that recognition becomes difficult, if not impossible. It is not merely growing, boys grow;—it is positive, perplexing and perpetual change: a butterfly hath not undergone more transmogrifications in its progress through life, than a village belle in her arrival at the age of seventeen.

The first appearance of the little lass is something after the manner of a caterpillar, crawling and creeping upon the grass, set down to roll by some tired little nurse of an eldest sister, or mother with her hands full. There it lies—a fat, boneless, rosy piece of health, aspiring to the accomplishment of walking and talking; stretching out its chubby limbs; scrambling and sprawling; laughing and roaring; there it sits, in all the dignity of the baby, adorned in a pink-checked frock, a blue spotted pinafore, and a little white cap, tolerably clean, and quite whole. One is forced to ask if it be boy or girl; for these hardy country rogues are all alike, open-eyed, and weather-stained, and nothing fearing. There is no more mark of sex in the countenance than in the dress.

In the next stage, dirt-encrusted enough to pass for the crysalis, if it were not so very unquiet, the gender remains equally uncertain. It is a fine, stout, curly-pated creature of three or four, playing and rolling about, amongst grass or mud, all day long; shouting, jumping, screeching—the happiest compound of noise and idleness, rags and rebellion, that ever trod the earth.

Then comes a sunburnt gipsy of six, beginning to grow tall and thin, and to find the cares of the world gathering about her; with a pitcher in one hand, a mop in the other, an old straw bonnet of ambiguous shape, half hiding her tangled hair; a tattered stuff petticoat, once green, hanging below an equally tattered cotton frock, once purple; her longing eyes fixed on a game of base-ball at the corner of the green, till she reaches the cottage door, flings down the mop and pitcher, and darts off to her companions, quite regardless of the storm of scolding with which the mother follows her runaway steps.

So the world wags till ten; then the little damsel gets admission to the charity school, and trips mincingly thither every morning, dressed in the old-fashioned blue gown, and white cap, and tippet, and bib and apron of that primitive institution, looking as demure as a nun, and as tidy; her thoughts fixed on button-holes, and spelling-books, those ensigns of promotion; despising dirt and base-ball, and all their joys.

Then at twelve, the little lass comes home again, uncapped, untippeted, unschooled;—brown as a berry, wild as a colt, busy as a bee—working in the fields, digging in the garden, frying rashers, boiling potatoes, shelling beans, darning stockings, nursing children, feeding pigs,—all these employments varied by occasional fits of romping, and flirting, and idle play, according as the nascent coquetry, or the lurking love of sport, happens to preponderate; merry, and pretty, and good with all her little faults. It would be well if a country girl could stand at thirteen. Then she is charming. But the clock will move forward, and at fourteen she gets a service in a neighbouring town; and her next appearance is in the perfection of the butterfly state, fluttering, glittering, inconstant, vain,—the gayest and gaudiest insect that ever skimmed over a village green. And this is the true progress of a rustic beauty, the average lot of our country girls; so they spring up, flourish, change and disappear. Some indeed marry and fix amongst us, and then ensues another set of changes, rather more gradual, perhaps, but quite as sure, till grey hairs, wrinkles, and linsey-woolsey, wind up the picture.

All this is beside the purpose. If woman be a mutable creature, man is not. The wearers of smock frocks, in spite of the sameness of the uniform, are almost as easily distinguished by an interested eye, as a flock of sheep by the shepherd, or a pack of hounds by the huntsman: or to come to less affronting similes, the members of the House of Commons by the Speaker, or the gentlemen of the bar by the Lord Chief Justice. There is very little change in them from early boyhood. "The child is father to the man" in more senses than one. There is a constancy about them; they keep the same faces, however ugly; the same habits, however strange; the same fashions however unfashionable; they are in nothing new-fangled. Tom Coper, for instance, man and boy, is and has been addicted to posies,—from the first polyanthus to the last China rose, he has always a nosegay in his button hole; George Simmons may be known a mile off, by an eternal red waistcoat; Jem Tanner, summer and winter, by the smartest of all smart straw hats; and Joel Brent, from the day that he left off petticoats, has always, in every dress and every situation, look-

ed like a study for a painter—no mistaking him. Yes! I know every man and boy of note in the parish, with one exception,—one most signal exception, which "haunts and startles and waylays" me at every turn. I do not know, and I begin to fear that I never shall know Jack Hatch.

The first time I had occasion to hear of this worthy, was on a most melancholy occurrence. We have lost—I do not like to talk about it, but I cannot tell my story without—we have lost a cricket match, been beaten, and soundly too, by the men of Beech-hill, a neighbouring parish. How this accident happened, I cannot very well tell; the melancholy fact is sufficient. The men of Beech-hill, famous players, in whose families cricket is an hereditary accomplishment, challenged and beat us. After our defeat, we began to comfort ourselves by endeavouring to discover how this misfortune could possibly have befallen. Every one that has ever had a cold, must have experienced the great consolation that is derived from puzzling out the particular act of imprudence from which it sprang, and we on the same principle, found our affliction somewhat mitigated by the endeavour to trace it to its source. One laid the catastrophe to the wind—a very common scapegoat in the catarrhal calamity—which had, as it were, played us booty, carrying our adversary's balls right and ours wrong; another laid it to a certain catch missed by Tom Willis, by which means Farmer Thackum, the pride and glory of the Beech-hillers, had two innings; a third to the aforesaid Thackum's remarkable manner of bowling, which is circular, so to say, that is, after taking aim, he makes a sort of *chassée* on one side, before he delivers his ball, which pantomimic motion had a great effect on the nerves of our eleven, unused to such quadrilling; a fourth imputed our defeat to the over-civility of our umpire, George Gosseltine, a sleek, smooth, silky, soft-spoken person, who stood with his little wand under his arm, smiling through all our disasters—the very image of peace and good humour; whilst their umpire, Bob Coxe, a roystering, roaring, bullying blade, bounced, and hectored, and blustered from his wicket, with the voice of a twelve-pounder; the fifth assented to this opinion, with some extension, asserting that the universal impudence of their side took advantage of the meekness and modesty of ours, (N. B. it never occurred to our modesty, that they might be the best players) which flattering persuasion appeared likely to prevail, in fault of a better, when all on a sudden, the true reason of our defeat seemed to burst at once from half a dozen voices, re-echoed like a chorus by all the others—"It was entirely owing to the want of Jack Hatch! How could we think of playing without Jack Hatch!"

This was the first I heard of him. My inquiries as to this great player were received with utter astonishment. "Who is Jack Hatch?" "Not know Jack Hatch!" There was no end to the wonder—"not to know him argued myself unknown." "Jack Hatch—the best cricketer in the parish, in the county, in the country! Jack Hatch, who had got seven notches at one hit! Jack Hatch, who had trolled, and caught out a whole eleven! Jack Hatch, who besides these marvellous gifts in cricket, was the best bowler and the best musician in the hundred,—could dance a hornpipe and a minuet, sing a whole song-book, bark like a dog, mew like a cat, crow like a cock, and go through Punch from beginning to end! Not know Jack Hatch!"

Half ashamed of my non-acquaintance with this admirable Crichton of rural accomplishments, I determined to find him out as soon as possible, and I have been looking for him more or less, ever since.

The cricket-ground and the bowling-green were of course, the first places of search; but he was always just gone, or not come, or he was there yesterday, or he is expected to-morrow—a to-morrow which, as far as I am concerned, never arrives;—the stars were against me. Then I directed my attention to his other acquirements; and once followed a ballad-singer half a mile, who turned out to be a strapping woman in a man's great-coat; and another time pierced a whole mob of urchins to get at a capital Punch—when behold, it was the genuine man of puppets, the true squeakery, the "real Simon Pure," and Jack was as much to seek as ever.

At last I thought that I had actually caught him, and on his own peculiar field, the cricket-ground. We abound in rustic fun, and good humour, and of course in nick-names. A certain senior of fifty, or thereabout, for instance, of very juvenile habits and inclinations, who plays at ball, and marbles, and cricket, with all the boys in the parish, and joins a kind merry buoyant heart to an aspect somewhat rough and care-worn, has no other appellation that ever I heard but "Uncle;" I don't think, if by any strange chance he were called by it, that he would know his own name. On the other hand, a little stunted pragmatical urchin, son and heir of Dick Jones, an absolute old man cut shorter, so slow, and stiff, and sturdy, and wordy, passes universally by the title of "Grandfather"—I have not the least notion that he would answer to Dick. Also a slim, grim-looking, white-headed lad, whose hair is bleached, and his skin browned by the sun, till he is as hideous as an Indian idol, goes, good lack! by the pastoral misnomer of the "Gentle Shepherd." Oh manes of Allan Ramsay! the Gentle Shepherd!

Another youth, regular at cricket, but never seen except then, of unknown parish, and parentage, and singular uncouthness of person,

dress, and demeanour, rough as a badger, ragged as a colt, and sour as verjuice, was known, far more appropriately, by the cognomen of "Oddity." Him, in my secret soul, I pitched on for Jack Hatch. In the first place, as I had in the one case a man without a name, and in the other a name without a man, to have found these component parts of individuality meet in the same person, to have made the man to fit the name, and the name fit the man, would have been as pretty a way of solving two enigmas at once, as hath been heard of since Œdipus his day. But besides the obvious convenience and suitability of this belief, I had divers other corroborating reasons. Oddity was young, so was Jack;—Oddity came up the hill from leaward, so must Jack;—Oddity was a capital cricketer, so was Jack;—Oddity did not play in our unlucky Beechhill match, neither did Jack;—and, last of all, Oddity's name was Jack, a fact I was fortunate enough to ascertain from a pretty damsel who walked up with him to the ground one evening, and who on seeing him bowl out Tom Coper, could not help exclaiming in a soliloquy, as she stood a few yards behind us, looking on with all her heart, "Well done, Jack!" That moment built up all my hopes; the next knocked them down. I thought I had clutched him, but willing to make assurance doubly sure, I turned to my pretty neighbour, (Jack Hatch too had a sweetheart) and said in a tone half affirmative, half interrogatory, "That young man who plays so well is Jack Hatch?"—"No, ma'am, Jack Bolton!" and Jack Hatch remained still a sound, a name, a mockery.

Well! at last I ceased to look for him, and might possibly have forgotten my curiosity, had not every week produced some circumstance to relumine that active female passion.

I seemed beset by his name, and his presence, invisibly as it were. Will of the wisp is nothing to him; Puck, in that famous Midsummer Dream, was a quiet goblin compared to Jack Hatch. He haunts one in dark places. The fiddler, whose merry tones come ringing across the orchard in a winter's night from Farmer White's barn, setting the whole village a dancing, is Jack Hatch. The whistler, who trudges homeward at dusk up Kibe's lanes, out-piping the nightingale, in her own month of May, is Jack Hatch. And the indefatigable learner of the bassoon, whose drone, all last harvest, might be heard in the twilight, issuing from the sexton's dwelling on the Little Lea, "making night hideous," that iniquitous practiser is Jack Hatch.

The name meets me all manner of ways. I have seen it in the newspaper for a prize of pinks; and on the back of a warrant on the charge of poaching;—N. B., the constable had my luck, and could not find the culprit, otherwise I might have had some chance of seeing him on that occasion. Things the most remote and discrepant issue in Jack Hatch. He caught Dame Wheeler's squirrel; the Magpie at the Rose owes to him the half dozen phrases with which he astounds and delights the passers-by; the very dog Tero,—an animal of singular habits, who sojourns occasionally at half the houses in the village, making each his home till he is affronted—Tero himself, best and ugliest of finders—a mongrel compounded of terrier, cur, and spaniel—Tero, most remarkable of ugly dogs, inasmuch as he constantly squints, and commonly goes on three legs, holding up first one, and then the other, out of a sort of quadrupedal economy to ease those useful members—Tero himself is said to belong of right and origin to Jack Hatch.

Every where that name meets me. 'T was but a few weeks ago that I heard him asked in church, and a day or two afterwards I saw the tail of the wedding procession, the little lame clerk handing the bridemaid, and a girl from the Rose running after them with pipes, passing by our house. Nay, this very morning, some one was speaking—Dead! what dead? Jack Hatch dead?—a name, a shadow, a Jack o' lantern! Can Jack Hatch die? Hath he the property of mortality? Can the bell toll for him? Yes! there is the coffin and the pall—all that I shall ever see of him is there! —There are his comrades following in decent sorrow—and the poor pretty bride, leaning on the little clerk—My search is over—Jack Hatch is dead!

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

MY SCHOOL-FELLOWS.

"Five pupils were my stint, the other
I took to compliment his mother."
PLEADER'S GUIDE.

All the world knows what a limited number of pupils means; our stint was twenty; and really, considering the temptations of great girls, very great girls, too old to learn, as parlour-boarders; and little girls, very little girls, too young to learn, as pets, we kept to it vastly well. We were not often more than thirty; principally because the house would not, with a proper regard to health and accommodation—points never forgotten by our excellent-intentioned governess—conveniently contain a greater number. If the next house could have been procured, we should soon have increased to fifty; and, indeed, might have gone on gradually multiplying till we had travelled half round the square: for Mrs. S. had always a difficulty in saying no—that ugliest of monosyllables—and the task was not rendered easier when she was beset by the mingled temptations of interest, flattery, and affection. It

was best as it was; we were quite enough, even though, early in my abode, a lucky accident incident to the state ridded us of those anomalous personages, the parlour-boarders.

An old pupil having arrived at the presentation age, seventeen, and her guardians not knowing exactly what to do with her, she was continued in H. P. upon that footing. I shall never forget the difference that one day made in this fair damsel. Translated on a sudden from the school-room to the drawing-room! preferred at once over the heads of her fellows! I never saw such a change. Perhaps a *parvenu* of the French Revolution might be something like it, or a boy officer in his first regimentals, or a knight of the last edition, or an author the night of a successful play, or a court beauty in her birth-day plumes, or any other shuttlecock pate, giddy with happiness and vanity. She was no worse, poor thing, than most girls of seventeen or eighteen; that transition state when learning is laid aside and knowledge not come; she was ostentatiously idle always, and affrontingly gracious, or astoundingly impertinent by fits and starts —patronised one day and forgot the next. No M. P. freshly elected for an independent borough, ever experienced a more sudden loss of memory. There was nothing remarkable in this: but unluckily nature never intended our poor *parvenue* for a lady of consequence. She was born to be a child all her days! and, which was much worse, to look like one;—the most insignificant little fair-haired girl that ever lived. Dress did nothing for her; her very milliner gave her up in despair. Gowns turned into frocks when tied round her slim straight waist;—caps, turbans, feathers, muffs, all artificial means of giving age, and size, and importance, failed in this unfortunate case. Never did a faded beauty take so much pains to look like a girl, as she did to look like a woman. I believe that she would have consented to be dressed like her grandmother, if it would have made her seem as old. But all was in vain; time only could cure her obstinate youthfulness of form and expression, and time travelled rather slower with the idle girl than he had been used to do with the busy one; so that, after a few days' display of her gay plumage, she wearied of her airs and her finery, and withdrew as much as possible from her old companions, to partake of the larger society and more varied amusements amongst which she began to be introduced. Three months after, she reappeared in the school-room quite a different creature, absent, pensive, languishing, silly beyond her usual silliness, and in great want of a sympathising friend. She soon found one of course; every "Tilburina, mad in white satin," may make sure of a "confidante mad in white dimity." She soon found a friend, a tall, sleepy-eyed girl, as simple as herself—and then the closetings, the note-writings, the whisperings, the mystery, the importance! The whole school was on tiptoe to find out the secret, and the confidante was in great danger of telling, when, luckily for her reputation, the secret told itself. One fine night, when the moon shone brightly, the fair Tilburina set off for Gretna Green. After this we had no more parlour-boarders.

But although we had no more parlour-boarders, we were fertile in great girls,—young ladies sent from the country for "improvement," as the milliners say, who, after a seven years' apprenticeship in some provincial fashion-shop, come up to the capital to be finished: (alas! they generally found that they had to begin)—or the desperately naughty and the hopelessly dull, banished from home to be out of the way, and to try what school would do;—or the luckless daughters of the newly wealthy, on whom the magic air of a London seminary was expected to work as sudden a transformation as the wand of Cinderella's fairy godmother. They were the most to be pitied. How often, during the fiery ordeal of the first half-year, they must have wished themselves poor again!—The most interesting of these unfortunate rich people were three sisters from Orkney, the youngest past sixteen, whose mother had unexpectedly succeeded to the large inheritance of an Indian cousin. They were gentlewomen born and bred, these Minnas and Brendas of the Shetland islands, though as wild and unformed and as much used to liberty as their country ponies. Unaccomplished they were of course, but they could never have been thought ignorant any where but in a London school. The mistake lay in sending them there, amongst a tribe of little pedants, with all the scaffolding of learning about them. The eldest bore the transition pretty well. She had health too delicate to enjoy in all its license her natural freedom; and had lived two or three years with an aunt in Edinburgh, so that she was become in a manner reconciled to civilization; beside she had a natural taste for elegance and refinement, and gave her whole attention and free will to the difficult task of beginning at twenty to conquer the rudiments of French and Italian, and music and drawing. The second sister weathered the storm almost equally well, though in a different manner. She was so overflowing with health and spirits, so fearless and uncaring, so good humouredly open in confessing her deficiencies, and so wisely regardless of lectures and exhortations, that she won her way through the turmoil of lessons and masters, without losing an atom of her hardihood and buoyancy. To be sure she learned nothing; but there was no great harm in that.—Her youngest sister was not so fortunate—Oh, that charming sister Anne! They were all fine tall young women, but Anne was something more. I never saw any thing so lovely as her bright blooming complexion, her

glittering blue eyes, and her light agile form, when in some cold windy morning that reminded her of Orkney, she would bound across the garden, with her hat in her hand, and her brown curling hair about her shoulders, forgetting in the momentary enjoyment, where she was and all around her. That blessed oblivion could not last long; and then came the unconquerable misery of shame and fear and shyness, a physical want of liberty and fresh air, and a passionate and hopeless longing for her early home. She pined and withered away like a wild bird in a cage, or a hardy mountain plant in a hot-house; and without any definite complaint, was literally dying under the united influence of confinement, and smoke, and the French grammar.—They carried her into the country, first to Richmond, then to Windsor Forest; but trees and quiet waters had no power over her associations. They talked of a journey to Italy,—that was worse still; she loathed the "sweet breath of the south." At last they were wiser; they took her home: and the sweet Anne, restored to her old habits and her own dear island, recovered. Nothing else could have saved her.

A complete contrast to these fair Zetlanders might be found in another triad of sisters, old settlers in H. P.,—short, dark, lively girls, who knew the school as men are sometimes said to know the town, and knew nothing else; were clever there and there only. Their father, a widower and a man of business, sent them from home mere infants, and, providing kindly and carefully for their improvement and comfort, seldom sought to be pleased or troubled with their company. This was no hardship to these stirring spirits, who loved the busy stage on which they played such capital parts, foremost everywhere, especially in mischief, first to be praised and last to be found out. They were as nearly alike in age and stature, as three sisters born at three different times, well could be,—any two of them might have passed for twins; and having in common a certain readiness of apprehension, a quickness of memory, and an extraordinary pliability of temper, as well as the brown complexion, the trim small figure and quick black eye, they usually passed for fac-similes of one another in mind and person. There were differences, however, in both. Catharine, the eldest, was by far the most perfect specimen of school craft. She was a manœuvrer such as it did one good to see; got places and prizes nobody knew how; escaped by a miracle from all scrapes; was a favourite at once with the French teacher and the English; was idle, yet cited for industry; naughty, yet held up as a pattern of good conduct; thoroughly selfish, and yet not disliked. She was, in short, a perfect stateswoman; wound the whole school round her finger; and wanted nothing of art but the art to conceal it. Even that point she might have compassed, had not her features and voice stood in her way—a lurking slyness in her smile and eye, and a sort of *falsetto* tone in her speech. But she did no harm, and meant none. She drove straight to her objects, but she took care not to overset the passers-by. Charlotte, the next sister, was not content with this negative merit; she had all the address of her elder-born, and made a more generous use of it; got praises and prizes for herself, and pardons and holidays for all the world. Hers was real popularity—nobody could help loving Charlotte. She was like Catharine, too; but it was such a pretty likeness, with her laughing gipsy face, and her irresistible power of amusing. She was a most successful and daring mimic, made no scruple of taking people off to their faces, and would march out of the room after Mrs. S***, or poor Madame, with the most perfect and ludicrous imitation of the slow measured step of the one, and the mincing trip of the other, the very moment after she had coaxed them out of some favour. Nevertheless, we all loved Charlotte; besides her delightful good humour, she used her influence so kindly, and was sure to take the weaker side. We all loved Charlotte. Jane, *la cadette*, more resembled Catharine, only her ambition was of a lower flight. She was a cautious diplomatist, and aimed less at success than at safety, had a small quiet party amongst the younger fry, was the pet of the housemaids, and won her way by little attentions,—by mending gloves, making pincushions, drawing patterns, and running on errands, in which last accomplishment she had an alertness so surprising, that Madame used to say she dazzled her eyes. In spite of her obligingness, nobody thought of loving Miss Jane; but she got on astonishingly well without it, and managed her wisers and betters by falling in with their ways.

All our sisters were not so much alike. One pair was strikingly different. The eldest, the favourite of a very silly mother, was a beauty, poor child, and subject to all the discipline which growing beauties are fated to endure. Oh the lacing, the bracing, the bonneting, the veiling, the gloving, the staying within for fear of sun or wind or frost or fog! Her mamma would fain have had her wear a mask to preserve her complexion, and so much dreaded the sweet touch of the air, that her poor victim seldom got out of doors, and had little other exercise than dancing and the dumb-bells. I am sure she would have given "all the worlds that people ever have to give," to be plain. Morally speaking, perhaps it was well for her that beauty should come in the shape of so disagreeable a consciousness; it effectually preserved her from vanity. She was a most genuine, kind-hearted, natural girl, thoroughly free from conceit or pretension of any kind. Her sister Julia had enough

for both. Miss Julia was the pet of a father, who was, though in a different line, quite as silly as his wife; and having a tolerable memory, a plodding spirit of application, and an unbounded appetite for applause, was in training for a learned lady, a blue stocking in embryo. What an insufferable little pedant it was, with its studies and its masters, more in number than the instructors of the *bourgeois gentilhomme*, its dictionaries of arts and sciences, and its languages without end! Words! words! words! nothing but words! One idea would have put her out. It was a pity, too, for she was a good-natured and well-meaning person, only so grave and dull and formal. However precious her learning might have been, she would have bought it dearly, for it cost her her youthfulness,—at thirteen she was old. Neither did this incessant diligence tell as one might have expected with her masters; they praised her of course, and held her up as an example to the clever and the idle; but I don't think they would have been much charmed to have had many such pupils. Certainly she was the least in the world of a goose; always troublesome in asking stupid questions, and more troublesome still in not understanding the answers. Once, indeed, she made a grand display of science and erudition. Mr. Walker came to give us a course of lectures, and Miss Julia pulled out a little square red book, and made notes—notes in a sort of hieroglyphic, which she was pleased to call short-hand; incomprehensible notes—notes that may sometimes have been paralleled since at the Royal Institution, but which nobody had ever dreamed of in our school. Oh! the glory of those pot-hooks and hangers! As if purposely to enhance her reputation, one of her class-fellows, who was in a careless idle way something of a rival to Miss Julia, happened to be an egregious coward, hated guns and gunpowder, squibs and crackers, and all those iniquitous shocks and noises which are at once sudden and unexpected. She had sitten out, with grief and pain, by help of ducking her head, shutting her eyes, and putting her fingers in her ears, two or three popgun lectures on chemistry and mechanics: but when the electricity came, she could bear it no longer: she fairly ran away, escaped unperceived in the *melée*, and esconced herself under her own bed, where she might have remained undetected till doomsday, had not the unforeseen vigour of a cleanly housemaid, fresh from the country, fairly unearthed her, actually swept her out. Think, what a contrast! What a triumph! Courage, and short-hand notes of lectures, on the one side; cowardice, ignorance, and running away on the other! Miss Julia was never so tall in her life. The *éclat* of the little square book even consoled her, when, in the week after this adventure, a prize, for which she had been trying all the half-year, was wrested from her by the runaway.

Besides the usual complement of languid East Indians, and ardent Creoles, we had our full share of foreigners. Of one charming Italian girl, much older than myself, I remember little but the sweet sighing voice, the graceful motions, and the fine air of the head. I always think of her when I look at the Cartoons;—Raphael must have studied from such women. She left school shortly after my arrival there, and was succeeded by an exquisitely pretty Anglo-Portuguese, whom, from her name, her aversion to roast pig—strange antipathy!—and her regularly spending Saturday at home, we suspected (for it was not avowed) to be a Jewess. Be that as it may, she was the most splendid piece of natural colouring that ever I beheld. An ivory complexion, with cheeks and lips like damask roses, black laughing eyes with long silky lashes, and rich clusters of black curls parting on her white brow. She was beauty itself. She soon went away too; and then came the daughter of a crack-brained Austrian Baron, straight from Vienna. There was nothing remarkable in her face or person, except the tender expression of her large blue eyes: yet she was peculiar from her foreign dress and manner, and her ignorance of all languages save her native German, and so much Italian as might help her through the most ordinary wants and duties of the day. Above all, she was interesting from her gentleness, her melancholy, and her early and disastrous fate. She died suddenly during the summer holidays. How many young hearts grieved for her, even amid the joys of home; and how we missed her sweet patient looks, her few words—all words of kindness, it seemed as if she could learn no other—when we returned! We were not wise to grieve; her short life had been a life of sorrow, and the grave was her best resting-place. It is not wise—but still, after a lapse of twenty years, it saddens me to think of her death. And there is another, and a far dearer school-fellow, a foreigner, too, of whom I think almost as sadly; for we are parted by such distance, that even now as I write I know not if she be alive or dead. I speak of the young countess C., sent from Russia for the advantage of an English education, began under a private governess, and concluded with us. She resembled the Greek drama in her pure and harmonious beauty; and the gentle dignity of her manner sustained the impression. Every body admired her, though only one dared to love her; and the repaying that love by the most constant and cordial affection allowed not much intercourse beyond a general kindness and good-will with the rest of our little world. In truth, she had no time for intimacies; she had a hunger and a thirst for knowledge, such as I have never seen equalled; knowledge of all sorts and degrees, from the most trifling womanly occupations—making gum-seals,

imitating cameos, working frills, up to the severest manly studies, mathematics, and the classics. I never saw any one so universally accomplished. Music, though she played well on many instruments, was perhaps the least striking of her acquirements; drawing and languages the most so. Her English especially was enchanting; you could just distinguish her from a native by an originality, a raciness, a floating grace, like that which pervades the letters of Mrs. Klopstock. Oh! what a charming creature she was! How thoroughly free from vanity and self-conceit! her industry was astonishing: she used to apologise for it sometimes, as I sate by her side doing nothing. "Really," she would say, "she could not help it!"—as if her diligence had been a fault, and my idleness a virtue. The dear, dear Sophia! parting from her was my first sorrow.

Last on our roll of foreigners, came two French girls: one of them merely a fair specimen of her pleasant nation—sprightly, good-humoured, amusing, and plain: the other a person of some note in this chronicle, being—and it is saying much—beyond all manner of competition the greatest dunce in the school. Zenobie de M—— had lost both her parents in the Revolution, and was under the care of an aunt, splendidly married, and living in London, in the very first world. She was a fine, striking, fashionable-looking girl, in the French style of beauty; rather large-boned, angular and high-shouldered; but so light, erect, and agile, that the very defects of her figure seemed graces. Her face, though that too told her country, was pretty, in spite of a wide mouth and a cocked-up nose: pretty from its sparkling expression—all smiles, and blushes, and animation: so were her manners. We had not a more agreeable and intelligent girl in the house; how she could contrive to be a dunce I cannot imagine—but a dunce she was, in the most comprehensive sense of that ill-omened word. She could not spell two syllables in any language, could scarcely write her name, could not cast up three figures, could not construe the simplest sentence, could not read the notes in music, never could, and never did, learn the catechism. This seems incredible on recollection, and it seemed more so at the moment. Nothing but a school could have brought the fact fully out; and even with the proofs hourly before our eyes, we could not help thinking sometimes that we must have done her injustice. Her ingenuity in evading the pains and penalties of duncicalness was very great. She had a dexterous way of excusing any error in speech, by pleading her English education for a French fault, or her French birth for a mistake in English; so that she claimed to speak both languages with the allowance of a foreigner. She spoke them, as she played the piano, entirely by ear, with great elegance, but incorrectly. In all sports, or light accomplishments, she was unrivalled. Skipping-ropes and battledores, and tambourines, and castanets, in her graceful hands, were her own delight, and the delight of all beholders. But the triumph of triumphs for Zenobie was dancing-day; to see her, and her countryman the dancing-master—he teaching, and she executing, such pirouettes and entrechats as none but French heels could achieve—both looking down with a very visible contempt on "English awkwardness with two left legs." Those Mondays and Wednesdays must pretty well have compensated for the mortifications of the rest of the week; and she needed some compensation: for, with all the splendour of her home, and the elegance of her appearance, it was evident that she was neglected. The mother's heart and the mother's eye were wanting; you might tell that she was an orphan. She abounded in trinkets and nicknacks, and fashionable frippery; but no comforts, no indulgences, no garden-bonnet, no warm pelisse, no cakes or fruit, no shillings or half-crowns, no consideration for her gentlewomanly spirit! I never shall forget the generous pleasure with which she shared half a dozen oranges—the rare present of some titled friend—between those, who from happier circumstances had been enabled to be kind to her. Oh! she was very desolate, very forlorn! How often, when we were going home for the holidays, with smiling mothers and fathers, so impatient that they would scarcely allow time for an adieu, I have seen her black eyes full of tears as she anticipated the hours, or days, or weeks, that she must wait till an insolent waiting-maid should have leisure or will to remember her. Poor Zenobie! she left us suddenly to return to Paris with her aunt. The last time I heard of her she was a celebrated beauty at the court of Napoleon. I don't know what has become of her since the change of dynasty, but I hope she is about the court still—it is just what she is fit for; she was made for feathers and long trains, and smiling, and graciousness, and dancing, and small-talk; she ought to be at court; a court life would so become her; and she would become it like a diamond necklace, polished and glittering and precious alike from the fashion and the material. I hope she is still at court.

We are now fairly at the end of our foreign list. There are two or three more British worthies for whom we must find a niche in another place, along with our English teacher and our authorised play.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE WOOD.

April 20th.—Spring is actually come now, with the fulness and almost the suddenness of a northern summer. To-day is completely April;—clouds and sunshine, wind and showers; blossoms on the trees, grass in the fields, swallows by the ponds, snakes in the hedgerows, nightingales in the thickets, and cuckoos every where. My young friend Ellen G. is going with me this evening to gather wood sorrel. She never saw that most elegant plant, and is so delicate an artist that the introduction will be a mutual benefit; Ellen will gain a subject worthy of her pencil, and the pretty weed will live;—no small favour to a flower, almost as transitory as the gum cistus; duration is the only charm which it wants, and that Ellen will give it. The weather is, to be sure, a little threatening, but we are not people to mind the weather when we have an object in view; we shall certainly go in quest of the wood-sorrel, and will take May, provided we can escape May's follower; for, since the adventure of the lamb, Saladin has had an affair with a gander, furious in defence of his goslings, in which rencontre the gander came off conqueror; and as geese abound in the wood to which we are going (called by the country people the Pinge,) and the victory may not always incline to the right side, I should be very sorry to lead the Soldan to fight his battles over again. We will take nobody but May.

So saying, we proceeded on our way through winding lanes, between hedge-rows tenderly green, till we reached the hatch-gate, with the white cottage beside it embosomed in fruit-trees, which forms the entrance to the Pinge, and in a moment the whole scene was before our eyes.

"Is not this beautiful, Ellen?" The answer could hardly be other than a glowing rapid "Yes!"—A wood is generally a pretty place; but this wood—Imagine a smaller forest, full of glades and sheep-walks, surrounded by irregular cottages with their blooming orchards, a clear stream winding about the brakes, and a road intersecting it, and giving life and light to the picture; and you will have a faint idea of the Pinge. Every step was opening a new point of view, a fresh combination of glade and path and thicket. The accessories too were changing every moment. Ducks, geese, pigs, and children, giving way, as we advanced into the wood, to sheep and forest ponies; and they again disappearing as we became more entangled in its mazes, till we heard nothing but the song of the nightingale, and saw only the silent flowers.

What a piece of fairy land! The tall elms overhead just bursting into tender vivid leaf, with here and there a hoary oak or a silver-barked beech, every twig swelling with the brown buds, and yet not quite stripped of the tawny foliage of Autumn; tall hollies and hawthorn beneath, with their crisp brilliant leaves mixed with the white blossoms of the sloe, and woven together with garlands of woodbines and wild briars;—what a fairy land!

Primroses, cowslips, pansies, and the regular open-eyed white blossom of the wood anemone (or to use the more elegant Hampshire name, the windflower) were set under our feet as thick as daisies in a meadow; but the pretty weed we came to seek was coyer; and Ellen began to fear that we had mistaken the place or the season.—At last she had herself the pleasure of finding it under a brake of holly—"Oh look! look! I am sure that this is the wood-sorrel! Look at the pendent white flower, shaped like a snow-drop and veined with purple streaks, and the beautiful trefoil leaves folded like a heart,—some, the young ones, so vividly yet tenderly green that the foliage of the elm and the hawthorn would show dully at their side,—others of a deeper tint, and lined, as it were, with a rich and changeful purple!—Don't you see them?" pursued my dear young friend, who is a delightful piece of life and sunshine, and was half inclined to scold me for the calmness with which, amused by her enthusiasm, I stood listening to her ardent exclamations—"Don't you see them? Oh how beautiful! and in what quantity! what profusion! See how the dark shade of the holly sets off the light and delicate colouring of the flower!—And see that other bed of them springing from the rich moss in the roots of that old beech tree! Pray let us gather some. Here are baskets." So quickly and carefully we began gathering, leaves, blossoms, roots and all, for the plant is so fragile that it will not brook separation!—quickly and carefully we gathered, encountering divers petty misfortunes in spite of all our care, now caught by the veil in a holly bush, now hitching our shawls in a bramble, still gathering on, in spite of scratched fingers, till we had nearly filled our baskets and began to talk of our departure:—

"But where is May? May! May! No going home without her. May! Here she comes galloping, the beauty!"—(Ellen is almost as fond of May as I am.)—"What has she got in her mouth? that rough, round, brown substance which she touches so tenderly? What can it be? A bird's nest? Naughty May!"

"No! as I live, a hedgehog! Look, Ellen, how it has coiled itself into a thorny ball! Off with it May! Don't bring it to me!"——And May, somewhat reluctant to part with her prickly prize, however troublesome of carriage, whose change of shape seemed to me to have puzzled her sagacity more than any

event I ever witnessed, for in general she has perfectly the air of understanding all that is going forward—May at last dropt the hedgehog; continuing however to pat it with her delicate cat-like paw, cautiously and daintily applied, and caught back suddenly and rapidly after every touch, as if her poor captive had been a red-hot coal. Finding that these pats entirely failed in solving the riddle, (for the hedgehog shammed dead, like the lamb the other day, and appeared entirely motionless), she gave him so spirited a nudge with her pretty black nose, that she not only turned him over, but sent him rolling some little way along the turfy path,—an operation which that sagacious quadruped endured with the most perfect passiveness, the most admirable non-resistance. No wonder that May's discernment was at fault: I myself, if I had not been aware of the trick, should have said that the ugly rough thing which she was trundling along, like a bowl or a cricket-ball, was an inanimate substance, something devoid of sensation and of will. At last my poor pet thoroughly perplexed and tired out, fairly relinquished the contest, and came slowly away, turning back once or twice to look at the object of her curiosity, as if half inclined to return and try the event of another shove. The sudden flight of a wood-pigeon effectually diverted her attention; and Ellen amused herself by fancying how the hedgehog was scuttling away, till our notice was also attracted by a very different object.

We had nearly threaded the wood, and were approaching an open grove of magnificent oaks on the other side, when sounds other than of nightingales burst on our ear, the deep and frequent strokes of the woodman's axe, and emerging from the Pinge we discover the havoc which that axe had committed. About twenty of the finest trees lay stretched on the velvet turf. There they lay in every shape and form of devastation: some, bare trunks stripped ready for the timber carriage, with the bark built up in long piles at the side; some with the spoilers busy about them, stripping, hacking, hewing; others with their noble branches, their brown and fragrant shoots all fresh as if they were alive—majestic corses, the slain of to-day! The grove was like a field of battle. The young lads who were stripping the bark, the very children who were picking up the chips, seemed awed and silent, as if conscious that death was around them. The nightingales sang faintly and interruptedly—a few low frightened notes like a requiem.

Ah! here we are at the very scene of murder, the very tree that they are felling; they have just hewn round the trunk with those slaughtering axes, and are about to saw it asunder. After all it is a fine and thrilling operation, as the work of death usually is. Into how grand an attitude was that young man thrown as he gave the final stroke round the root; and how wonderful is the effect of that supple and apparently powerless saw, bending like a riband, and yet overmastering that giant of the woods, conquering and overthrowing that thing of life! Now it has passed half through the trunk, and the woodman has begun to calculate which way the tree will fall; he drives a wedge to direct its course; —now a few more movements of the noiseless saw; and then a larger wedge. See how the branches tremble! Hark how the trunk begins to crack? Another stroke of the huge hammer on the wedge, and the tree quivers, as with a mortal agony, shakes, reels, and falls. How slow and solemn and awful it is! How like to death, to human death in its grandest form! Cæsar in the Capitol, Seneca in the bath, could not fall more sublimely than that oak.

Even the heavens seem to sympathise with the devastation. The clouds have gathered into one thick low canopy, dark and vapoury as the smoke which overhangs London; the setting sun just gleaming underneath with a dim and bloody glare, and the crimson rays spreading upwards with a lurid and portentous grandeur, a subdued and dusky glow, like the light reflected on the sky from some vast conflagration. The deep flush fades away, and the rain begins to descend; and we hurry homeward rapidly yet sadly, forgetful alike of the flowers, the hedgehog, and the wetting, thinking and talking only of the fallen tree.

THE VICAR'S MAID.

About three years ago, our neighbouring village, the little hamlet of Aberleigh, received one of the greatest blessings which can befall a country parish, in the shape of an active, pious, and benevolent Vicar. Chaucer shall describe him for me, for I prefer the real words of the old poet, to the more elaborate and ornamented version of Dryden:

"A good man ther was of religioun
That was a poure parsone of a toun;
But riche he was of holy thought, and werk;
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde prech;
His parishens devoutly wolde he teche;
Benigne he was and wonder diligent
And in adversite ful patient;
And swiche he was yproved often sithes
Ful loth were him to cursen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he geven out of doute
Unto his poure parishens aboute
Of his offring, and eke of his substance;
He coude in litel thing have suffisance.
Wide was his parish, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne left nought for no rain ne thonder
In sikeness and in mischief to visite
The feuest in his parish moche, and lite
Upon his fete, and in his hand a staff:
This noble ensample to his shepe he yaf,

That first he wrought and afterward he taught;
Out of the gospel he the wordes caught.—
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to sinful men not dispitous;
Ne of his speche dangerous ne digne,
But in his teching discrete and benigne.
To drawen folk to heven with fairnesse,
By good ensample was his businesse;
But if were any persone obstinat,
What so he were of highe or low estat,
Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones.
A better preest I trowe that no wher non is,
He waited after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him no spiced conscience;
But Cristes lore and his apostles twelve
He taught, but first he folwed it himselve."

Prologue to the CANTERBURY TALES.

Such was Mr. Mansfield. And he brought to Aberleigh a still greater blessing than the Roman Catholic Priest of Chaucer could do, (although, by the way, the old bard was a follower of Wickliffe, the herald of the Reformation) in a wife, as good as himself: two lively promising girls; and a rosy, frank-hearted boy, quite worthy of such parents. One shall seldom see together a finer family, for our "gode parsone" was not only "lite of foot," a man in the prime of life, full of vigour and activity, but united the intellectual countenance of the scholar, to the elegance and polish of a gentleman. Mrs. Mansfield was remarkably pretty; and the young people had about them all the glow and the brightness of their fresh and happy age. But the beauty of the vicarage, the beauty of the parish, was a female servant who accompanied them, their maid Mary. She was five or six and twenty, and looked as much; of middle height, and middle size, rather inclining to the fullness and luxuriance of womanhood; fair, blooming, smiling, and bright-eyed, yet with an expression so chastised, so perfected by modesty, that no one could look on her without being sure that she was as good as she was lovely. Her voice, and dress, and manner too, were all in keeping with her sweet face, gentle, quiet, and retiring. In short she had not been a week in the village, before all the neighbours were asking each other—"Have you seen the vicar's pretty maid?"

The home which received this delightful family was every way worthy of its inhabitants. A country parsonage is generally in itself and its associations a happy mixture of the unpretending and the comfortable; and of all parsonages Aberleigh is the most beautiful. It stands amidst a labyrinth of green lanes, running through a hilly and richly-wooded country, whose valleys are threaded by the silver Loddon. On one side is the magnificent wreck of a grand, but deserted mansion-house, built with porch and pinnacle, and rich gothic windows, in the style of Elizabeth's day: on the other the old village church; its tower fancifully ornamented with brick-work, and the church-yard planted with broad flowering limes, and funeral yew-trees; leading up to the church, a short avenue of magnificent oaks; and behind the avenue, and divided from a lane by a considerable space, partly lawn, partly court, and partly flower-garden, stands the vicarage.

The house is a low irregular building, covered to the very roof with creeping shrubs, roses, woodbine, jessamine, clematis, and myrtles, flowering into the very chamber windows,—such myrtles as were never before seen in this part of England. One of them died in the hard winter, twelve years ago, and a chair and a stool were made of the wood. It took no polish, but still it had a pretty look and a pretty name; that English myrtle, it almost sounded like a contradiction. The garden is just suited to the house; large squares of fine turf with beds and borders of flowers divided by low box hedges, so thick and broad and level, that you might walk on them two abreast; with a long piece of water, in one compartment, stocked with gold and silver fish; a tall yew-hedge, fencing off the kitchen garden, and a sun-dial rising from the green turf opposite the house,—that voiceless monitor, whose silence is so eloquent, and whose gliding finger realizes, and perhaps suggested the sublime personification of Wordsworth—"Time the Shadow."

The Mansfields were exceedingly struck with their new habitation. They had hitherto resided on the coast of Sussex, the South Downs; so that accustomed to those green hills, and the fertile but unsheltered plains beyond them, the absolute nakedness of the land, and the vast and bare expanse of the ocean, they were almost as much unaccustomed to trees as a negro to snow, and first wondered at, then complained of, and at last admired our richly-wooded valleys, and the remains of old chases, and bits of wild forest scenery in which we abound. The artlessness with which these feelings were confessed, added a fresh charm to this interesting family. There is always something very attractive in the ignorance of any particular subject which we sometimes meet with amongst clever and cultivated people. Their questions are so intelligent, so poignant, so (to use a bold phrase) full of answers. They instruct our knowledge, and make us feel far more sensibly that which we teach. It was the pleasantest thing in the world, to walk through Aberleigh Wood with Clara Mansfield and Evelyn's Sylva, showing her, by the help of that delightful book, the differences of form and growth, and bark and foliage; sometimes half puzzled myself by some freak of nature, or oftener forgetting our avowed object in admiration of the pictorial beauty, the varied colouring, the play of light and shadow, and the magical perspective of that delightful spot.

The young people caught my enthusiasm, and became almost as completely foresters as the half-wild ponies, who owned the name,

or the still wilder donkies, whom we used to meet in the recesses of the wood, and whose picturesque forms and grouping, added the interest of life and motion to the landscape.

All the family became denizens of Aberleigh wood, except Mary, who continued a perfect Nereide, constant to the coast to a degree that rendered her quite unjust to our inland scenery. She languished under the reverse disease of a Calenture, pined for the water, and was literally, in a new sense of the word, sea-sick. To solace her malady, she would sometimes walk across the park to the Loddon, especially at sun-set; for to hear Mary, any one would have thought that that bright luminary never did make a set worth talking of, except when he could look at himself in a watery mirror; and then, when she reached the Loddon, provoked at the insufficiency of the spectacle, she would turn back without vouchsafing a second glance, although it is but justice to that poetical river to declare, that at Aberleigh bridge it is as broad, as glassy, and as beautiful a stream as ever the sun showed his face in, with much of the character of a lake; but Ullswater, or Winandermere, would have fared equally ill with Mary; nothing but the salt sea could content her.

It was soon obvious that our inland beaux were no better suited to her taste than our inland scenery. Half the young men in the village offered her suit and service. First, George Ellis the farrier, a comely youth, and well to do in the world, who kept an apprentice, and a journeyman, a horse and cart, two greyhounds, three spaniels, and one pointer, being indeed, by many degrees, the keenest sportsman in these parts;—George Ellis proffered to make her mistress of himself, his household, his equipage, and his stud; but was civilly rejected. The next candidate who presented himself was Ben Appleton, the son of a neighbouring farmer; Ben Appleton is a wag, and has a face and figure proper to the vocation: a shape tall, stout, and square, that looks stiff and is active; with a prodigious power of putting himself into all manner of out-of-the-way attitudes, and of varying and sustaining this pantomime to an extent that really seems inexhaustible. The manner in which he can, so to say, transpose that sturdy form of his, put his legs where his arms should be, and his arms in the place of his legs, walk on his hands, stand on his head, tumble, hop, and roll, might raise some envy in Grimaldi himself. His features are under the same command. Originally I suspect him to have been good-looking; but who can ever say that he has seen Ben Appleton's real face? He has such a roll of the eye, such a twist of the nose, such a power of drawing to either ear that broad mouth, filled with strong white teeth. His very talk is more like a piece of a laugh, than the speech of an ordinary man; and his actions have all the same tendency—full of fun, with a dash of mischief. But Ben is a privileged person, an universal favourite; and Mary, never dreaming of such a catastrophe as his falling in love, used to contemplate his tricks from afar, with something of the same amusement which she might have felt in watching a kitten or a monkey. For a long time he made his addresses with impunity; unsuspected and unrepelled; no one believed him in earnest. At last, however, Ben and his case became serious, and then Mary became serious too: he received a firm though gentle dismissal, and looked grave for a whole week. Next came Aaron Keep the shoemaker, the wisest man in the parish, noted all over the country for his knowledge of the stars, and judgment in the weather, and almost as notorious for his aversion to matrimony and his contempt for women. Aaron was said to have been jilted in his youth, which soured a kindly temper and put mistrust into his heart. Him, even him, did Mary's beauty and Mary's modesty vanquish. He who had been abusing the sex for the last forty years actually made her an offer. I suppose the happiest moment in his life must have been that in which she refused him. One can fancy him trembling over the narrowness of his escape, like the man who did not fall over Dover Cliff—but the offer was made.

The cause of all this obduracy at last appeared. A young sailor arrived at the vicarage, whom the most graphical of our poets shall assist me in describing:

> "Fresh were his features, his attire was new;
> Clean was his linen, and his jacket blue;
> Of finest jean his trowsers, tight and trim,
> Brushed the large buckle at the silver rim."
>
> CRABBE.

He arrived at the vicarage towards the end of winter, and was introduced by Mary to mine hostess of the Eight Bells as her half-brother; although Mary was so little used to telling fibs, that her blushes, and downcast looks and smiles between, in short, the whole pervading consciousness would have betrayed her, as Mrs. Jones, the landlady, observed, to any one who had but half an eye; to say nothing of Miss Clara's arch look as she passed them. Never was half-brother so welcomed; and in good truth he was well worthy of his welcome.

Thomas Clere was an exceedingly fine young man, of six or seven and twenty, with a head of curly black hair, a sun-burnt complexion, a merry, open countenance, and a bluff hearty voice that always sounded as if transmitted through a speaking-trumpet. He established himself at the Eight Bells, and soon became very popular in that respectable hostelry. Besides his good humour, his liberality, and his sea jokes, next to Irish jokes always the most delightful to rustic ears, perhaps because next to Irish, the least intelligi-

ble—your country bumpkin loves a conundrum, and laughs heartiest at what he does not understand; besides these professional qualifications, Thomas was eminently obliging and tolerably handy; offered his assistance in every emergency, and did more good, and less harm than most amateur helpers, who, generally speaking, are the greatest hindrances under the sun. Thomas was really useful. To be sure, when engaged in aiding Mary, a few casualties did occur from pre-occupation; once, for instance, they contrived to let down a whole line of clothes which he had been assisting to hang out. Neither party could imagine how the accident happened, but the washing was forced to be done over again. Another time, they, between them, overset the milk-bucket, and the very same day so over-heated the oven, that a whole batch of bread, and three apple-pies were scorched to a cinder. But Thomas was more fortunate with other coadjutors. He planted a whole patch of cabbages in a manner perfectly satisfactory, and even made a very decent cucumber-bed in mine host's garden. He churned Mrs. Jones's butter as well as Mary herself could have done it. He shaped bats, and cut wickets for the great boys, plaited wicker baskets for the younger ones, and even dug a grave for the sextoness, an old woman of eighty, the widow of a former sexton who held that office (corruptly, as our village radicals were wont to say) in conjunction with that of the pew-opener, and used to keep the children in order by one nod of her grey head, and to compound for the vicar every Sunday a nosegay of the choicest flowers of the season. Thomas, although not very fond of the job, dug a grave, to save sixpence for poor Alice. Afterwards this kindness was thought ominous.

No wonder that our seaman was popular. The only time he got into a scrape at Aberleigh, was with two itinerant showmen, who called themselves sailors, but who were, Thomas was sure, "nothing but land-lubbers," and who were driving about an unhappy porpoise in a wheelbarrow, and showing it at two-pence a head, under the name of a sea pig. Thomas had compassion on the creature of his own element, who was kept half alive by constant watering, and threatened to fight both the fellows unless they promised to drive it instantly back to the sea; which promise was made and broken, as he might have expected, if a breach of promise could ever enter into a sailor's conception. Our sailor was too frank even to maintain his Mary's maidenly artifice, and had so many confidants, that before Mr. Mansfield published the banns of marriage between Thomas Clere and Mary Howell, all the parish knew that they were lovers.

At last the wedding-day came. Aaron Keep left his work to take a peep at the bride, and Ben Appleton paid her the high compliment of playing no trick either on her or the bridegroom. How beautiful she looked in her neat and delicate dress, her blushes and her smiles! The young ladies of the vicarage, with whose family she had lived from childhood, went to church with her, and every body cried as usual on such occasions. Clara, who had never been at a wedding before, had resolved against crying; but tears are contagious things, and poor Clara's flowed, she did not well know why. This too was afterwards thought an ill omen.

Thomas and Mary had hired a room for a week in a neighbouring town, after which she was to return for a while to her good master and mistress; and he was to go to sea again in the good merchant-ship, the Fair Star. To go to sea again for one last voyage, and then to return rich, quite rich for their simple wishes, (Thomas's savings already yielded an income of twelve shillings a week) set up in some little trade, and live together all the rest of their lives—such were their humble plans. They found their short honeymoon, passed in a strange place, and in idleness, a little long, I fancy, in spite of true love, as greater people have done before them. Yet Mary would willingly have remained even under the sad penalty of want of occupation, rather than part with Thomas for the sea, which now first began to appear formidable in her eyes. But Thomas had promised, and must go on this one last voyage to Canada; he should be home in six months, six months would be soon gone, and then they would never part again. And so he soothed, and comforted, and finally brought her back to the vicarage, and left her there; and she, when the trial came, behaved as well as possible. Her eyes were red, to be sure, for a week or two, and she would turn pale when praying for "those who travel by land or by water," but still she was calm, and cheerful, and apparently happy.

An accident about six weeks after their separation, first disturbed her tranquillity. She contrived, in cutting a stick to tie up a tree carnation belonging to her dear Miss Clara, to lacerate very considerably the third finger of her left hand. The injury was so serious, the surgeon insisted on the necessity of sawing off the ring, the wedding-ring! She refused. The hurt grew worse and worse. Still Mary continued obstinate, in spite of Mrs. Mansfield's urgent remonstrances; at length it came to the point of sawing off the ring or the finger, and then, and not till then, not till Mr. Mansfield had called to aid all the authority of a master, did she submit—evidently with more reluctance and more pain than she would have felt at an amputation. The finger got well, and her kind mistress gave her her own mother's wedding-ring to supply the place of the severed one,—but it would not do; a superstitious feeling had seized her, a strange vague remorse; she spoke of her compliance as sinful; as if by divesting herself of the

symbol, she had broken the marriage tie. Our good vicar reasoned with her, and Clara laughed, and she listened mildly and sweetly, but without effect. Her spirits were gone; and a fear, partly superstitious, partly perhaps inevitable, when those whom we love are absent, and in danger, had now seized Mary Clere.

The summer was wet and cold, and unusually windy, and the pleasant rustling of that summer breeze amongst the lime-trees, the very tapping of the myrtles against the casement, as they waved in the evening air, would send a shiver through her whole frame. She strove against this feeling, but it mastered her. I met her one evening at the bridge, (for she had now learned to love our gentle river) and spoke to her of the water-lilies, which, in their pure and sculptural beauty, almost covered the stream. "Yes, Ma'am," said poor Mary, "but they are melancholy flowers for all their prettiness; they look like the carved marble roses over the great tomb in the chancel, as if they were set there for monuments for the poor creatures that perish by the waters"—and then with a heavy sigh she turned away, happily for me, for there was no answering the look and the tone.

So, in alternations, of "fear and trembling hope," passed the summer; her piety, her sweetness, and her activity continued unabated, perhaps even increased; and so in truth was her beauty; but it had changed its character. She was thinner, paler, and far, far sadder. So in augmented fear passed the autumn. At the end of August he was to have returned; but August was gone,—and no news of him. September crept slowly away, and still no word of Thomas. Mary's dread now amounted to agony. At length, about the middle of October, a letter arrived for Mr. Mansfield. Mary's eye caught the post-mark, it was that of the port from whence her husband sailed. She sank down in the little hall, not fainting, but unable to speak or move, and had only strength to hold out the letter to Clara, who ran to her on hearing her fall. It was instantly opened, and a cry of inexpressible horror announced the news. The good ship Fair Star was missing. She had parted company from several other vessels on her homeward voyage, and never been heard of since. All hope was over, and the owner of the Fair Star, from whom the letter came, enclosed a draft for the wages due to the deceased. Poor Mary! she did not hear that fatal word. The fatal sense had smitten her long before, as with a sword. She was carried to bed in a state of merciful suspension of suffering, and passed the night in the heavy and troubled sleep that so often follows a stunning blow. The next morning she awoke. Who is so happy as not to know that dreadful first-waking under the pressure of a great sorrow?—the vague and dizzying sense of misery we know not why? the bewildering confusion of memory? the gradual recollection? and then the full and perfect woe that rushes in such a flood over the heart? who is so happy as not to know this bitterness?—Poor Mary felt it sorely, suffocatingly: but she had every support that could be afforded. Mr. Mansfield read to her, and prayed with her. His excellent family soothed her and wept with her. And for two days she seemed submissive and resigned. On the third, she begged to see the fatal letter, and it acted with the shock of electricity. "Missing! only missing! He was alive—she was sure he was alive." And this idea possessed her mind, till hope became to her a worse poison than her old torturer, fear. She refused to put on the mourning provided for her, refused to remain in the tranquillity of her own apartment; and went about talking of life and happiness, with the very look of death. A hundred times a day she read that letter, and tried to smile, and tried to believe that Thomas still lived. To speak of him as dead seemed to her raised feelings, like murder. She tried to foster the faint spark of hope, tried to deceive herself, tried to prevail on others: but all in vain. Her mind was evidently yielding under this tremendous struggle; this perpetual and never-ceasing combat against one mighty fear. The sense of her powerless suspense weighed her heart down. When I first saw her, it seemed as if twenty years of anguish and sickness had passed over her head in those ten days; she was shrunken, and bent, and withered, like a plant plucked up by the roots. Her soft pleasant voice was become low, and hoarse, and muttering; her sweet face haggard and ghastly; and yet she said she was well, tried to be cheerful, tried to smile—oh, I shall never forget that smile!

These false spirits soon fled; but the mind was too unsettled, too infirm for resignation. She wandered about night and day; now weeping over the broken wedding-ring; now haunting the church-yard, sitting on the grave, *his* grave. Now hanging over the brimming and vapoury Loddon, pale as the monumental lilies, and seeming to demand from the waters her lost husband. She would stand there in the cold moonlight, till suddenly tears or prayer would relieve the vexed spirit, and slowly and shiveringly the poor creature would win home. She could still pray, and that was comfort: but she prayed for him; the earthly love clung to her and the earthly hope. Yet never was wifely affection more ardent, or more pure; never sufferer more gentle than that fond woman.

It was now winter; and her sorrows were evidently drawing near their close, when one evening returning from her accustomed wandering, she saw a man by the vicarage door. It was a thick December twilight, and in the wretched and tattered object before her, sick,

and bent, and squalid, like one who comes from a devouring shipwreck or a long captivity, who but Mary could have recognised Thomas Clere? Her heart knew him on the instant, and with a piercing cry of joy and thankfulness, she rushed into his arms. The cry alarmed the whole family. They hastened to share the joy and the surprise, and to relieve poor Thomas of his fainting burden. Both had sunk together on the snowy ground; and when loosened from his long embrace, the happy wife was dead!—the shock of joy had been fatal!

MARIANNE.

I HAVE had a very great pleasure to-day, although to make my readers fully comprehend how great a one, I must go back more years than I care to think of. When a very young girl, I passed an autumn amongst my father's relatives in a northern county. The greater part of the time was spent with his favourite cousin, the lady of a rich baronet, who was on the point of setting out on an annual visiting tour, as the manner is in those hospitable regions where the bad roads, the wide distances, and the large mansions, render an occasional sojourn so much preferable to the brief and formal interchange of mere dinner-parties. Sir Charles and lady C. were highly pleased at the opportunity which this peregrination of friendship and civility afforded, to show me a fine country, and to introduce me to a wide circle of family connections.

Our tour was extensive and various. My cousins were acquainted, as it seemed to me, with every one of consequence in the county, and were themselves two of the most popular persons it contained,—he from character, for never was any man more unaffectedly good and kind,—she from manner, being one of the pleasantest women that ever lived,—the most lively and good-humoured, and entertaining, and well-bred. In course, as the young relative and companion of this amiable couple, I saw the country and its inhabitants to great advantage. I was delighted with every thing, and never more enchanted than when, after journeying from house to house for upwards of a month, we arrived at the ancient and splendid baronial castle of the Earl of G.

Now I had caught from Sir Walter Scott's admirable poems, then in their height of fashion, as well as from the older collections of Percy and Ritson, with which I had been familiar almost from the cradle, a perfect enthusiasm for all that savoured of feudal times; and one of the chief pleasures which I had promised myself in my northern excursion was the probability of encountering some relics of those picturesque but unquiet days. Hitherto these expectations had been disappointed. Halls, places, houses, granges, lodges, parks, and courts out of number, we had visited; but neither in the north nor in the south had I yet been so happy as to be the inhabitant of a castle. This too was a genuine Gothic castle, towered and turreted, and battlemented, and frowning, as heart could desire; a real old castle, that had still a moat, and had once exhibited a draw-bridge; a castle that had certainly existed in the "old border day," and had in all probability undergone as many sieges as Branksome itself, inasmuch as it had, during its whole existence, the fortune to belong to one of the noblest and most warlike names of the "Western Wardenry." Moreover, it was kept up in great style, had spears, bows, and stags' horns in the hall, painted windows in the chapel, a whole suit of armour in the picture gallery, and a purple velvet state-bed, gold-fringed, coroneted, and plumed, covered with a purple quilt to match, looking just like a pall, and made up with bolsters at each end,—a symmetry which proved so perplexing to the mayor of the next town, who with his lady happened to sleep there on some electioneering, fairly got in at different ends, and lay the whole night head to foot.* I was not in the coroneted bed, to be sure; I do not think I should much have relished lying under that pall-like counterpane and those waving feathers; but I was in a castle grand and romantic enough even to satisfy the romance of a damsel under seventeen, and I was enchanted; the more especially as the number of the family party promised an union of the modern gaiety, which I was far from disliking, with the ancient splendour for which I sighed. But, before I had been four-and-twenty hours within those massive walls, I began to experience "the vanity of human wishes," to wonder what was become of my raptures, to yawn I did not know why, to repeat to myself over and over again the two lines of Scott that seemed most *à-propos* to my situation,

> "And all in high baronial pride
> A life both dull and dignified;"—

in short, to find out that stupid people will be stupid any-where, even in a castle. I will give after my fashion a slight outline, a sort of pen-and-ink drawing of the party round the dining table; and by the time they have scanned it, my readers, if they do not yawn too, will at least cease to wonder at my solecism in good-breeding.

We will begin at the earl, a veteran nearly seventy years of age, a tall lank figure with an erect military carriage, a sharp weather-beaten face, and a few grey hairs most exactly powdered and bound together in a slender

*This accident actually befell the then mayor of N. at Alnwick castle, some years back.

queue behind.—His talk was very like his person, long and thin; prosing most unmercifully about the American war, and telling interminable zig-zag stories, which set comprehension at defiance. For the rest, he was an excellent person, kind to his family and civil to his guests; he never failed to take wine with lady C. at dinner, and regularly every morning made me in the very same words a flourishing compliment on my rosy cheeks.

Next in order came the countess, tall, and lean like her husband, and (allowing for difference of sex and complexion, his skin resembling brickdust in colour, and hers being of the sort of paleness usually called sallow,) not unlike him in countenance. In their minds and manners there was also a similarity, yet not without some difference. Dulness in him showed itself in dead speech, in her in dead silence. Stiff and cold as a poker was my lady. Her fixed, settled, unsmiling silence hung over the banquet like a cloud, chilling and darkening all about her. Yet they say she was warm-hearted, and (which would seem extraordinary if we did not frequently meet with instances of the same apparent contradiction) was famous for epistolary composition, dealt out words in writing with astonishing fluency and liberality, and was celebrated far and near for that most intolerable waste of paper which is commonly known by the name of a sensible letter.

Then came the goodly offspring of this noble couple, that is to say, the three youngest; for the elder branches of this illustrious house were married and settled in distant homes. The honourable Frederic G., the only son who remained in the paternal mansion, was a diplomatist *in embryo*, a rising young man. His company they were not likely to enjoy long, since he was understood to be in training for the secretaryship to a foreign embassy. He had recently come into parliament for a neighbouring borough, and his maiden speech (I wonder who wrote it!) had created a prodigious sensation in the family circle. On the glory of that oration, the echo of his fame, he lived then, and has lived (as far as I know) ever since. I can only say that I never heard him utter more than a monosyllable at a time during the ten days that we breakfasted, dined, and supped in company—ineffable coxcomb! and I have not heard of his speaking in the house of commons from that time to this. There he sits, single-speech G. Of his elder sister, the lady Matilda, I can say no more than that she was reckoned one of the finest harp-players in England—a musical automaton, who put forth notes instead of words, and passed her days in alternate practisings for the purpose of subsequent exhibition (which fatiguing exercise was of course a continual and provoking struggle with a host of stringed difficulties), and in the exhibitions themselves, in which also to my ears the difficulties seemed to have the best of the battle. Then followed her sister, the lady Caroline, an intelligent-looking young woman, and no musician—but alack! the fair damsel was in love, and on the very point of marriage. Her lover Lord B. (who may as well fall into this division, since he was domesticated in the house and already considered as a son,) was also pleasant-looking,—but then he was in love too. Of course this couple, although doubtless very good company for each other, went for nothing with the rest of the party, of whose presence indeed they, to do them justice, seemed generally most comfortably unconscious.

Next came the appendages to a great house, the usual official residents. First appeared Mr. M. the family chaplain, a great mathematician, whose very eyes seemed turned inward as if contemplating the figures on his brain. Never was man so absent since the one described by La Bruyere. He once came down to dinner with the wrong side of his waistcoat outward; and, though he complained of the difficulty of buttoning it, could not discover the reason; and he has been known more than once to walk about all the morning, and even to mount the pulpit, with one white leg and one black (like the discrepant eyes of my friend the Talking Gentleman), in consequence of having forgotten to draw a silk stocking over his gauze one. He seldom knew the day of the month, often read a wrong lesson, and was pretty sure to forget his sermon; otherwise a most kind and excellent creature, whom for very pity nobody could think of disturbing when he appeared immersed in calculation, which was always. Secondly came Miss R., some time governess and present companion; what a misnomer! the errantest piece of still life I ever encountered, pale, freckled, red-haired, and all over small. Thirdly entered Dr. S., the family physician, a stern oracular man, with a big wig and a tremendous frown. Two red-faced gentlemen, *des vieux militaires*, who drank my lord's wine and listened to his stories, completed this amusing assembly.

There was another person who never appeared at the dining-table, but whose presence, during the two or three hours that she spent in the saloon in the morning, and about the same time which she passed in the drawing-room after dinner, distressed and annoyed me more than all the party put together. This was the honourable Mrs. G., the earl's mother, (the title had descended to him from an uncle) a lady in her ninety-second year, and sufficiently vigorous to justify the expectation that she might live to see a hundred. She was a tall, spare, tough-looking woman, with a long bony face, dim staring eyes, and an aspect altogether corpse-like and unearthly. Her dress was invariably of black silk with a very long waist, a point-lace kerchief, or rather tippet, and a very small short rounded apron of the same costly material. On her head she wore

a lace cap and lappets surmounted with a sort of shepherdess hat of black silk, fastened on with two enormous pins with silver tops. This dress, which, in gay colours and on a young and handsome woman, would have been very pretty, only served to make Mrs. G. appear more ghastly, more like a faded picture which had stepped out of its frame. She was a perpetual *memento mori;* a skull and cross-bones would hardly have been more efficacious in mortifying the vanity of youth. This, however, I could have endured: it was an evil in common; but the good lady had experienced the partial loss of faculty and memory so frequent at her advanced age, and, having unfortunately mistaken me for her great grand-child, the eldest daughter of Lord G.'s eldest son, she could by no means be turned aside from the notion which had so unaccountably seized her imagination, and treated me exactly as a doting, scolding great-grandmamma would be likely to treat her unlucky descendant,—a process which so thoroughly disconcerted me, a shy shamefaced girl, that, after I had undergone about six hours of hugging and lecturing from my pretended ancestress, I was fain to keep my room to avoid her intolerable persecution. In this dilemma the countess suddenly proposed to turn me over to Marianne; and a young lady about my own age, whom I had not before seen, made her appearance. Oh what a difference between her and the other inhabitants of the castle! What a lovely airy creature it was!

> "A dancing shape, an image gay,
> To haunt and startle and waylay;"

light and bounding as a fawn, with a wild fanciful beauty in her bright black eyes, in the play of her features, and the brilliancy of her dark yet glowing complexion! A charming creature in mind and in person, was Miss Marianne,—for by that name alone she was introduced to me,—almost equally charming in the high spirits whose elasticity harmonized with her animated beauty, or in the tender and pensive melancholy which so often checkered her gayer mood.

We became almost immediately intimate—happy privilege of youthful companionship!—and had speedily told each other our whole histories, as two young ladies meeting in an old castle ought to do. My story, I am sorry to say, was very little worthy of such a situation and opportunity for display. Nothing could be less romantic than the ease and comfort and indulgence in which my life had hitherto passed, nothing less adapted to a heroine than the secure and affluent middle station in which my happy lot then seemed to be fixed. My tale was told in two or three brief sentences. The history of my fair companion was not so quickly dispatched. What she knew of herself might indeed have been revealed in three words, since that amounted to nothing more than her having lived ever since she could recollect at G. Castle, sometimes in the nursery and the library, sometimes in the housekeeper's room, kindly treated by all, and taught by fits and snatches as she came in their way: so that her education, partly conducted by the young lady's governess, partly by the young gentleman's tutor, and sometimes even by Lady G.'s maid, bore a very strong resemblance to that ingenious exercise of female patience called patch-work, where you meet with bits of every thing and nothing complete. The two most extraordinary circumstances were her want of a surname (for she had never been called by any other appellation than Marianne) and the sedulous care with which, although living in the same house, she had been concealed from my *soi-disante* great-grandmother Mrs. G. The loss of faculty which occasioned that mistake was of recent occurrence, as the venerable lady had till within a few months been remarkable for the accuracy and clearness of her perceptions; and Marianne related fifty stories to prove the care with which her very existence was guarded from Mrs. G.'s knowledge,—the manner in which she had been crammed into closets, stowed under sofas, smuggled behind screens, or folded into window-curtains, at the first tap of the old lady's Italian heel,—and the menaces which were thrown out against the servants, if any should presume to name her in Mrs. G.'s presence. One unlucky footman had actually been discharged on the spot, for want of invention and presence of mind and fluency of lying: when questioned as to the arranger of the flowers in their vases (an art in which she excelled,) he stammered, and looked as if going to say Miss Marianne; for which piece of intended truth (an uncommon fault in a London footman!) the poor lacquey was dismissed.

Now if either of us had possessed the slightest knowledge of the world, these circumstances would hardly have failed to suggest Marianne's true origin. We should immediately have conjectured her to be the illegitimate offspring of some near connection of the family;—in fact she was the daughter of Lord G.'s second and favourite son, long since deceased, by a beautiful Italian singer who died in childbed of poor Marianne; but this was the last conjecture that would have entered either of our silly heads.—I, indeed, not yet seventeen, and carefully brought up, had hardly heard that such things were, and Marianne, although older and less guarded from the knowledge of fashionable wickedness, had, when left to choose her own studies, read too many novels, in which the heroines emerged from similar obscurity to high rank and brilliant fortune, not to have constructed a romance on that model for her own benefit. Indeed she had two, in one of which

she turned out to be a foreign princess, in the other the daughter of an English duke.

I remember being a little startled, when after I had given all my faith to the Russian legend (for the emperor Paul was the potentate on whom she had pitched for her papa—pretty choice!) she began to knock down her own castle in the air, for the sake of rebuilding it on an English foundation. I could readily imagine that she had one father, but could not quite comprehend what she should want with two: besides, having given up my mind to the northern romance, I did not like to be disturbed by a see-saw of conjectures, good for nothing but to put one out. I was of a constant disposition, and stuck to the princess Rusty-Fusty version of the story so pertinaciously, that I do not even know what duke she had adopted for her English father. Any one might have been proud of her; for, with all this nonsense, the offspring of an equivocal situation and a neglected education, she was a sweet and charming creature, kind and generous and grateful, with considerable quickness of talent, and a power of attaching those with whom she conversed, such as I have rarely seen equalled. I loved her dearly, and except the formal meals which we shared with the rest of the family, spent nearly the whole of my visit with her alone, strolling through the park or the castle in the mornings, and in the evenings sitting over the fire deep in girlish talk, or turning over the books in the old library with a less girlish curiosity. Oh how sorry we were to part! I saw nobody in the whole north like Marianne.

In a few months, however, I returned into the south, and in a very few more the kind cousins, with whom I had visited G. Castle, were removed from me by death. My other relatives in that county fell gradually off: some died; some went to reside abroad; and some were lost to me by the unintended estrangement which grows out of a long suspension of intercourse; so that my pleasant northern tour, unconnected with any previous or subsequent habits or associations, seemed an insulated point in my history, a brilliant dream called up to recollection at pleasure like some vivid poem, or some rare and gorgeous tapestry, rather than a series of real events burnt into the mind and the memory by the strange and intense power of personal feelings. Eighteen years had elapsed since I had seen or heard of Marianne. I knew indeed that the good earl and countess had died shortly after my visit, and that their aged mother must in the course of nature have passed away long ago. But of her own destiny I had heard nothing; and, being absorbed in new occupations and nearer friends, I had, I fear, ceased even to guess. The curiosity and wonder excited by her situation had long ceased (for wonder and curiosity are very young feelings,) and the interest produced by her character was dormant, though not extinct. In short, the black-eyed beauty of G. Castle was fairly forgotten, till my good stars led me this morning to B. to witness for the first and last time of my life, the ascent of a balloon.

Is there any one of my readers who has not seen this spectacle? If such there be, it may perhaps be necessary to say how much duller than most sights (and almost all sights unconnected with art are dull) that dangerous toy is; how much the letting off a boy's kite excels it in glee, and vies with it in utility; the science of balloons being, as far as I know, nearly the only discovery of this chemical and mechanical age, (when between steam-engines and diving-bells, man contrives to have pretty much his own way with the elements) which has continued to stand altogether still, as cumbersome, as unmanageable, and almost as ugly as the original machine of Montgolfier. Nevertheless the age is also a staring age, and we poor country people who know no better, are easily taken in, so that the announcement of this aeronautic expedition (for so it was called in the programme) drew at least ten thousand gazers into the good town of B. and amongst the rest my simple self.

The day was showery by fits, and we thought ourselves very fortunate in being able to secure a commodious window in a large room just overlooking the space where the balloon was filling. At first we looked at that flagging flapping bag of tri-coloured silk, made dingy by varnish, and dingier still by the pack-thread net-work which enclosed it, giving it, when nearly filled, something of the air of a canteloupe melon. A thousand yards of silk, they said, were wasted in that unsightly thing, enough (as a calculating milliner of my acquaintance, indignant at such misapplication of finery, angrily observed) to have made a hundred dresses with trimmings and tippets. We looked at the slow filling ball till in our weariness we thought it became emptier, and then we looked at a prettier sight,—the spectators. They consisted for the most part of country people, spread all the way down the large space to the meadows, perched on the church-tower, on the side of the F. hill, on trees, on wagons, on the churchyard wall. Nothing was visible but heads and upturned faces, and here and there a little opening made by habitual deference for horsemen and carriages, in that grand and beautiful living mass, a pleased and quiet crowd. Then we looked at the peaceful landscape beyond, the Thames winding in its green meadows under the fine range of the O**shire hills, shut in on one side by the church with its magnificent Gothic tower, on the other by the before-mentioned eminence crowned with trees as with a plume. Then a sudden shower put motion in the crowd; flight and scrambling and falling ensued; numerous umbrellas were expanded: and the whole scene resembled

those processions which one has sometimes seen on Indian paper, and became quite oriental.

At last, however, we were tired of gazing without, and turned our attention within doors. The room was full of fluctuating company, all strange to us except the lady of the house; and the party nearest to us, our next-window neighbours, naturally engaged us most. The party in question consisted of a gentleman and lady in the very morning of life, who, placed in an old-fashioned dow seat, were sedulously employed in guarding and caressing a beautiful little girl about three years old, who stood between them infinitely amused at the scene. They were, as our hostess informed us, a young couple of large fortune newly settled in the neighbourhood, and seemed of that happy order of beings, handsome, smiling, and elegant, to whom every occupation is graceful. Certainly nothing could be prettier or more becoming than the way in which they talked to their lovely little girl. Another lady, evidently belonging to the party, stood near them, occasionally bending to the frequent questions of the child, or making a polite reply to the animated observations of her father, but constantly declining his offered seat, and apparently taking as little interest in the scene as well might be.

This indifference to an object which was exciting the rapturous attention of some thousands of spectators kept me so comfortably in countenance, that it excited a strong desire to discover as much as I could without rudeness of a person, whose opinions on one point, seeming to accord so remarkably with my own, gave assurance, as I modestly thought, of a sensible woman.

The lady was tall and slender, and dressed with that remarkable closeness and quietness, that entire absence of fashion or pretension, which belong almost exclusively to governesses or the serious. A snow-white dress entirely untrimmed, a plain but nicely fitting dove-coloured spencer, a straw cottage bonnet, and a white veil a good deal over the face, might have suited either caste; but there was something in that face which inclined for the governess, or rather against the devotee. It was a pale thin countenance, which had evidently seen thirty summers, with features which had lost their bloom and roundness, but still retained their delicate symmetry, lighted up by a pair of black eyes inexpressibly intelligent—saucy, merry, dancing, talking! Oh those eyes! Whenever a gentleman said something learnedly wrong about hydrogen or oxygen, or air-valves or gasometers, or such branches of learning, or a lady vented something sentimentally silly about sailing amongst the stars, those black eyes flashed into laughter. Of a certainty they did not belong to one of the serious, or they would have been kept in better order; I had therefore quite decided in favour of the governess, and had begun to puzzle myself to remember in whose head beside that of the younger Mina (that most interesting of all the Spanish patriots, who was in London during the hundred days, and was afterwards most barbarously shot in Mexico), I had seen such a pair of dancing lights, when the whole truth flashed upon me at a word. "Marianne"—began the pretty mamma of the pretty child, and in a moment I too had exclaimed "Marianne!" had darted forward, and seized both her hands, and in less than a minute we were seated in the remotest corner of the room, away from the bustle and the sight, the gazers and the balloon. It was turned off, I believe,—at least I have a faint recollection of certain shouts which implied its ascent, and remember being bored by a sentimental young lady to come and look at it "sailing like an eagle along the sky." But neither Marianne nor I saw or thought of the spectacle. We were in the midst of old recollections and old pleasures, now raining questions on each other, now recurring delightedly to our brief companionship, and smiling half ashamed and half regretfully on the sweet illusion of that happy time.

Alas for my beautiful princess of G. Castle!—Here she was, no longer young, fair, or blooming, a poor nursery governess! Alas for my princess! Sixteen years of governessing, sixteen years passed in looking at the world through the back windows, might well have dimmed that brilliant beauty, and tamed that romantic imagination.—But I had not conversed with her five minutes before I found that her spirit had lost none of its buoyancy, that under all her professional demureness she was still, as her black eyes promised, one of the airiest and sprightliest creatures in the world. She glanced rapidly, but with great feeling, over the kindness she had experienced from the whole family on the death of lord and lady G., and then, in a style of light and playful gaiety, indescribably graceful and attractive, proceeded to give me the history of her successive governesships, touching with a pencil inimitably sportive, the several humours and affectations which she had encountered in her progress through the female world. "I was never," said she in conclusion, "so happily situated as I am at present. The father and mother are charming people, and my little Emma" (by this time the child had joined us, and was nestling in Marianne's lap) "is the most promising pupil I ever had in my life. In little more than four months she has learned three letters and three quarters. I should like to see her through the alphabet—but yet"—and here she broke off with a smile and a blush, and a momentary depression of her sparkling eyes, that again brought before me the youthful beauty of G. Castle, and irresistibly suggested the idea of a more suitable

termination to the romance than it had originally promised. Such blushes have only one meaning. Finding that she still paused, I ventured to finish the sentence. "But yet you will leave this promising pupil?"—"Yes."—"Not, however, for a similar situation?"—"No."—"And who is the happy man?"—"A very old friend. Do you remember Mr. M., the chaplain at the castle?"—"What! the great mathematician with the scratch wig, who saw without seeing, and heard without hearing, who wore his waistcoat the wrong way, and went to chapel with one white stocking and one black? Is he *le futur?*" Marianne laughed outright. "His son! his son! He must have been at Cambridge when you were with us, for he also is a great mathematician, although I promise you he wears his waistcoat with the right side outward, and his legs are both of one colour. We have been waiting for a college living; and now"—and again she broke off and blushed and smiled; and again that smiling blush of modesty and pleasure and love brought back for a moment the fleeting beauty of seventeen; and even in that moment the show was over, the crowd dispersed, and we parted.*

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

THE ENGLISH TEACHER.

Miss R., the English teacher, to whom poor Madame took so unfortunate an aversion, was one of the most charming women that I have ever known. The pretty word "graziosa," by which Napoleon loved to describe Josephine, seemed made for her. She was full of a delicate grace of mind and person. Her little elegant figure, and her fair mild face, lighted up so brilliantly by her large hazel eyes, corresponded exactly with the soft gentle manners which were so often awakened into a delightful playfulness, or an enthusiasm more charming still, by the impulse of her quick and ardent spirit. To be sure she had a slight touch of distraction about her (distraction French, not distraction English), an interesting absence of mind. She united in her own person all the sins of forgetfulness of all the young ladies; mislaid her handkerchief, her shawl, her gloves, her work, her music, her drawing, her scissors, her keys; would ask for a book when she held it in her hand, and set a whole class hunting for a thimble, whilst the said thimble was quietly perched upon her finger. Oh! with what a pitying scorn our exact and recollective Frenchwoman used to look down on such an incorrigible shatterbrain! But she was a poetess, as Madame said, and what could you expect better!

In spite of this misfortune, she was universally liked and respected; I, for my own part, loved Miss R. even better than Madame; though I had some temptations to dislike her, she having, to my sorrow, undertaken the peculiar charge of my education for the last two years of my stay at school (from thirteen to fifteen,) which she followed up with extraordinary rigour; so that instead of passing half hours and whole hours, half days and whole days, at the side of my beautiful countess, in the full enjoyment of my dearly beloved idleness, I found myself, to my unspeakable discomposure, getting by rote (an operation which I always detested) sundry tedious abridgments of heraldry, botany, biography, mineralogy, mythology, and at least half a dozen "ologies" more, compiled by herself for my express edification. I gave her fair warning that I should forget all these wise things in no time, and kept my word; but there was no escaping the previous formality of learning them. Oh! dear me! I groan in spirit at the very recollection. I was even threatened with the Latin grammar. All her instructions, however, were not administered in so unpalatable a form. To fill up any nook of time which the common demands of the school and her private lessons might leave vacant, we used to read together, chiefly poetry. With her I first became acquainted with Pope's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, and the Paradise Lost. Those were moments of intense gratification; she read capitally, and was a most indulgent hearer of my remarks and exclamations: suffered me to admire Satan, and detest Ulysses, and rail at the pious Æneas as long as I chose. After these master poets we turned to some peculiar favourites of her own, Akenside, whom I could not understand then (neither can I now), and Young, whom I could not read. Three weary evenings did we consume over his first three nights; but the lecture was so dismal, so afflicting, and my impatience and *ennui* were so contagious, that at last we fairly gave him up. I have never opened the Night Thoughts since; the bare recollection of that attempt is enough.

Beside the readings, Miss R. compensated in another way for the pain and grief of my unwilling application: she took me often to the theatre; whether as an extra branch of education, or because she was herself in the height of a dramatic fever, it would be invidious to inquire. The effect may be easily foreseen; my enthusiasm soon equalled her own; we began to read Shakspeare, and read nothing else. There was of course a great difference in kind between her pleasure and mine; her's was a critical, mine a childish enjoy-

* Not however for another period of eighteen years. Before the summer was gone, I had the pleasure of visiting her at her pretty rectory, of seeing with my own eyes that a great mathematician may wear stockings to match, and of witnessing the quiet gaiety, the heartfelt happiness of the dear and charming Marianne.

ment; she loved fine acting, and I loved the play. Perhaps I loved the written drama more than she did; for her admiration was given rather to the great actor than to the author; she thought more of John Kemble than of Shakspeare—it was a real passion for the stage. She never saw our great school-room without longing to turn it into a theatre. Two events, which happened in my last half-year, most unexpectedly realized her wish—though the accomplishment fell far short of her expectations. Madame, poor Madame, the determined enemy of poetry and private theatricals, left us; she returned to France, and we never saw her again; and, just at the same time, a young lady arrived from the country, so different from all other country consignments, that our prejudices melted before her like snow in the sunshine.

Eliza M. was a tall, full-formed, noble-looking girl of sixteen, with an expressive open countenance, and a fine frankness of manner. Her conversation was singularly engaging and original,—fresh, ardent, eloquent, like that of a clever boy;—manly, not masculine. No one could be in her company five minutes without being convinced of her great powers and of their high cultivation. To add to our astonishment (for we had really the impertinence to think most places of education within the bills of mortality, and all beyond them, mere dens of ignorance,) to crush all our prejudices at once, she was just come from a country school, where her very last act had been the representation of Comus. Here was a discovery! In the existing state of Miss R.'s fancy, she became convinced that Eliza M. owed not only her graceful carriage and her fine elocution, but all her talents and accomplishments solely to the having sustained a part in this masque; and she instantly resolved to new-model all her pupils at a stroke in the same way. She immediately communicated her resolution to Eliza and myself, and left us to consult Mrs. S. on the subject. We remained together in high expectation, turning over Milton's exquisite poem, casting the parts, spouting, admiring, and I, between whiles, a little regretting that, though the very finest thing in the world in its way, Comus was not Richard the Third. The regret was unnecessary; we were not fated to act Comus. Miss R. returned from Mrs. S. with the appointed play, the only play which that worthy governess would hear of—the only play fit to be acted by young ladies—the Search after Happiness, a pastoral drama; and the respective idolators of Milton and Shakspeare sate down to the perusal of Mrs. Hannah More. Do any of my readers know the piece? It is a dialogue in rhyme, moral, sensible, and well-intentioned, but not very dramatic, and not pastoral at all. The story may be shortly told. Four fashionable young ladies, sufficiently tired of themselves and of the world, go forth into the fields one fine morning to seek a venerable elderly lady, Urania by name, through whose wisdom they expect to be made immediately good and happy. They have the usual scenic good fortune of meeting with the only human being who could properly direct them, in the person of a certain young shepherdess, called Florella, a *protegée* of Urania, who leads them to her at once. She receives the distressed damsels kindly; hears their several confessions, not of sins but of propensities; for they have all, according to Pope's system, a "ruling passion;" gives them good advice and a breakfast; and the piece concludes. It had nearly come to an abrupt conclusion in our case. Critics of fifteen and sixteen are not remarkably tolerant: and Mrs. Hannah More, though a forcible prose writer, is, without offence be it spoken, no great poet! and measured with Milton—the Search after Happiness compared to Comus! Alas for poor Miss R.! within a quarter of an hour after assuming the managerial throne, she shared the fate of other managers,—her two principal actors threw up their parts. This fit of disgust was, however, rather violent than lasting. Our manager soothed and scolded, and reasoned and bribed; and we, after picking this "Pastoral Drama" to pieces as thoroughly as ever children picked a daisy, began to relent; listened to reason, and finally promised to try; a condescension to which we were induced, partly by the cogent argument that any play was better than none, and partly by the promise of real scenery, new dresses, and splendid decorations. The play was now generally announced; read with prodigious applause, (it seemed that we two had exhausted the critical carping;) and cast in proper form. Eliza accepted Urania, stipulating that the speeches should be a good deal shortened, especially in the didactic parts; and that the worthy lady should be made considerably younger. She declared that she would not even have acted Comus, if Comus had been an old woman; and, above all, she demanded that one expression, which particularly affronted her, "the goodly dame," should be transmuted into "gentle fair," or some such elegancy. The four seekers after happiness were next to be disposed of. Cleora, the leader and talker of the party, fell to my share. This Cleora was a learned lady, a blue stocking of the very first water, and if intended by the author, as I suppose it was, for a lesson, was sadly thrown away in the present instance. God knows there was small danger of my aspiring after too much knowledge! What a pity that Miss Julia, maker of notes, writer of short-hand, reporter of lectures, should have left school! She would have played Cleora to the life. She should have staid on purpose, and I dare say she would have staid, if she could have foreseen such an opportunity of exhibiting the universality of

her genius. Next came "the fair Euphelia," a pretty, vain, coquettish character, which, in right of beauty, was consigned to our beautiful countess. What a mistake was that, too! No one could look at the pure and lofty style of her countenance without being convinced that vanity was to her an impossible fault; proud she might be, vain she could not! one should as soon have suspected the Apollo Belvidere. The third lady errante, "the gentle Laurinda," was much better disposed of.—Never was a part more felicitously cast! Our Laurinda was a fine, showy girl, tall, plump, inert, and languishing, with a fair blooming complexion, light sleepy eyes, long flaxen hair, and a general comely silliness of aspect. Her speech had a characteristic slowness, an indolent drawl, all her words were dragged, as it were, so that those who did not know her were apt to accuse her of affectation.—Those who did, saw at once that she was a thoroughly well-meaning young person, with much good-humour and no want of sense, but with an entire absence of energy and application, a capacity of unlearning, a faculty of forgetting exactly suited to the part. She was, in short, the very Laurinda of the play.

Last of the quartet was Pastorella, a romantic nymph always in love. Truly she was well suited, too; having fallen to the lot of a very lovely girl, quite an Asiatic beauty, who, though not in the least addicted to such silly pastime, had an oriental languor in her slow and graceful movements, and a depth of tenderness in her large black eyes, which gave a verisimilitude to her representation of the forlorn damsel. She was also an admirable musician, and Miss R. determined to call her sweet and passionate voice in aid of the illusion. So she was to sing some fervid Italian ditty to the accompaniment of her own harp; which would have just the proper sentimental air (your romantic young lady always does accompany herself on the harp, especially out of doors) and to be drest as much like the heroine of a novel as possible. Then came the shepherdess, Florella. We had a charming Florella; a gentle, simple, country girl, whose round, slender figure, her golden hair, blue eyes, and glowing complexion, her innocent voice, and engaging smile, might have suited

> ——— "the prettiest low-born lass that ever
> Ran on the green sward."———

She seemed born to wear little white hats wreathed with flowers, and jackets laced tightly to her small trim waist, to weave chaplets, tie up nosegays, and twist garlands round her crook.

Our dramatis personæ now wanted only the two daughters of Urania to be complete.—These two daughters might almost have passed *pour des personnages muets*. They had scarcely ten lines between them;—anybody might have filled such parts, and yet the filling of them nearly overset our play. They had been overlooked at first, being really too unimportant to attract attention, and remained for two or three days totally forgotten; till Zenobie, our clever dunce, and Charlotte, one of our managing triad (her sister Catharine was ill or she would have manœuvred for all three), took a fancy to act them, and immediately preferred a petition to that effect, which was readily granted. Nothing could equal the consternation of their mamma, elect, when she heard this intelligence. To be a mamma at all was bad enough; but to have one daughter taller than herself, and another, who, though not so tall, looked like an old fairy, was not to be endured. She flew to Miss R.; Miss R. was sorry, but she had promised. She remonstrated, coaxed, argued, threatened, talked of resigning—did resign; still no relaxation. The whole house was split into factions; all who knew anything of acting felt with poor Urania, that the grouping required absolute children; all who did not, sided with the popular favourites, Zenobie and Charlotte. At last, after the manager's firmness and the prima donna's obstinacy had been well tried—after one whole day of turmoil and suspense—Charlotte's good-humour decided the question. She prevailed on Zenobie to join her in withdrawing their request; and Urania, well chidden for her presumption, penitent, but triumphant, resumed her part, and at the end of a few days was even permitted to choose her children. And an excellent choice she made. Our sweet little Irish girl, the sometime Pizarro, who did every thing but grow, and at twelve years of age looked eight, as at eight she had wit enough for twelve, played the eldest daughter; whilst a rosy, curly-pated, laughing brat of six, a perfect picture of a child, just like one of Sir Joshua's, stepped down from the frame, lisped through the youngest to admiration. Nor were Charlotte and Zenobie forgotten. The three sisters formed a sort of chorus of shepherdesses in attendance on Florella, and sang and danced at the banquet; whilst, at the end of their dance, Zenobie, exquisitely dressed, and armed with a superb garland of roses, darted forward and executed a *pas seul*. Such a *pas seul!* The French dancing-master declared that nothing like that had ever been seen in England. It was the only part of our play that was encored.

And now we began to experience, in its fullest enchantment, the extraordinary power that acting possesses over the human fancy,—the total absorption, the artificial importance, the busy idleness! The whole school was turned topsy-turvy; nothing was thought of or talked of but our play; there was an entire pause and intermission of all lessons, an universal holiday. Those who did not act in the drama were wanted to act audience; and the making of paper flowers, the construc-

tion of paste-board trellis-work, the painting and decorating of Urania's bower, the only part of the scenery we managed at home, (all the rest was hired from a private theatre) found full employment for little and great. The actresses were busy enough. Urania had her part to study and her dress; or rather she had to reconcile these perplexing contradictions,—to submit her decorations to the sedateness of her character, and to take away somewhat of age and gravity from her character to suit the elegance of her costume. Oh the coquetry of her point-lace cap! and the profusion and graceful folds of fine Indian muslin in which she was enveloped! She looked as much like a splendid young bride, and as little like a reduced elderly gentlewoman, as could be. Besides these weighty and opposing considerations, Urania undertook the charge of teaching her daughters and the shepherdess Florella; and was extra-officially employed in giving hints to all parties, from the harp mistress, who composed our songs, down to the shoemaker who furnished our sandals,—from the manager rehearsing, down to Laurinda, trying to learn. The fair Euphelia, too, had a double difficulty to encounter, her dignity and the *th*. Oh those terrible consonants! she could manage all other English sounds. We changed every word we could; but there was no dispensing with the *thes* and the *thats*; so she was forced to go on *deing* and *dating* so prettily! we scarcely wished to cure such an imperfection. Pastorella's cares were of a gentler sort. She was engaged in the pleasant task of selecting the tenderest Italian song, and the most romantic trimming that fashion would permit. With the first she was easily suited; the last was rather a puzzle. First she fixed upon the heart's-ease, whose sentimental names, the pensée, and the love in idleness, rendered it peculiarly appropriate; but the heart's-ease is a daylight flower; its colours require the sun; and the yellow looks white and the purple black by candle-light; so that was given up. Then she tried the lily of the valley; that was too limp, and hung awkwardly;—then sprigs of myrtle; they were too stiff, and would not hang at all; so that she was fain to lay aside her softer emblems, and content herself with oak-leaves and acorns. My troubles lay in a different direction. At first I had inwardly grieved over the play and the part and the prologue (which also fell to my lot) as a sad waste of talent: I had fallen into the pretty general error of mistaking the love of an art, for the power of excelling in it, and had longed to come out in Milton or Shakspeare.—But I soon discovered, to the great improvement of my humility, that The Search after Happiness was only too good for me; in short, that I was about as bad an actress as ever trod the stage. To be sure, I did know my speeches by rote, and I also understood the sense of them; I could read the play decently enough; but in acting I was really deplorable; shame and fear and awkwardness had set their mark on me; there was no breaking the spell. My hands and arms, especially, were intolerable burthens. I never knew what to do with them; and should certainly have resigned in despair, but for the relief of a fan in the prologue, and a most comfortable promise from Florella, to pop a nosegay into my hand the moment she came on the scene. Nothing less could have reconciled me to remaining in the company. In proportion as I disappointed my own expectations, Urania exceeded them. She was, indeed, a consummate actress, in voice, person, manner, and expression. A pervading and indescribable grace, a fine quick intelligence, and a modest confidence, distinguishing every word and motion. I was never weary of admiring her.—Perhaps I might almost have envied such powers in any one else; but she was so kind-hearted, bore her faculties so meekly, was so ready to advise, and so eager to encourage and assist, that she quelled the evil spirit. She seemed perfectly unconscious of her high superiority; except the natural desire not to look too old, she never betrayed one spark of vanity through the whole piece.

At last, after a whole month's busy preparation, the great day arrived, luckily one of the shortest in December; for such a day of confusion and unrest and useless bustle I have never encountered before or since. From sunrise to sunset we were all running after we knew not what, talking, spouting, singing, laughing, or crying, without a moment's intermission. My particular exercise was practising a circular curtsy, which I had been taught to make as prologue; I curtsied till I could hardly stand. Of course we had plenty of vexations, besides those which we chose to cultivate for our private diversion. First of all, the sandals were not finished. In spite of three several messsages to the faithless shoemaker, the sandals never made their appearance till just half an hour after the shepherdesses had accomplished their dance in slippers. The fancy dresses of Urania's daughters never came at all; they were forced to play in white frocks. Then the decorations that did arrive, contrived to be almost as provoking as those that did not. A stupid milliner sent Euphelia a sky-blue plume to wear with her pink robe! Pastorella's new stays were two inches too large; Florella's jacket was three inches too small! and the green curtain a quarter of a yard too short. There was no end to the letting down, the letting out, and the taking in of that disastrous day. But the most perplexing of all our perplexities was occasioned by the innocent but unfortunate Laurinda. She had no mother, and was to be furnished with a splendid dress by her father's sister, viscountess A. We were anxiously

looking out for the expected parcel, the lady aunt being in the country, when a letter which arrived by post spread a general consternation and dismay. This letter, addressed to Laurinda, franked by the viscount, signed by the viscountess, and written by her maid, announced that the promised dress would be sent by the coach on Thursday, and they hoped would fit and please the intended wearer. Thursday! and this "the great, the important day" was Tuesday! Here was a calamity! We examined the letter again and again, spelt the word over and over, there it was plain and clear, T, h, u, the next letter was rather uncertain, it looked most like an r, but it might have passed for an e, without a loop, or an i, without a tittle. The Th was there as legible as copperplate, and never did those two letters give greater perturbation to our dear countess, and to us the committee of management. One of us, however, on a closer perusal of the letter, found that "pleased" was spelt "plased," and, on examining Laurinda, we farther discovered that the waiting gentlewoman was Irish. It might therefore be purely an error in spelling, arising from a vicious pronunciation. But this conjecture was considered as rather super-subtle, and at all events we could not comfortably rely even on a *femme-de-chambre's* false spelling. So we held a council on the case, and had just resolved to omit the character altogether, when the paraphernalia arrived, and restored the fair wearer to the honours of the play-bill. Such a dress was worth a little fright; it was equally superb and becoming: she looked like a peeress, in that magnificent birth-day suit; and within a few months she actually became one; —the earliest and best married of all our company was the gentle Laurinda.

At last the long and arduous duties of the tiring-room were over; and plumed and trained and spangled, pearl-powdered, or rouged, as fear and novelty made us look red or pale, we were safely escorted behind the green curtain, and left there by our manager, who resolved herself to join the company. Our theatre was a lofty spacious saloon, built after the house was erected, for the purpose of a dancing-room. It was well adapted to our present object, as it opened into another apartment by large folding doors; and the two together accommodated a very numerous and elegant audience. We behind the curtain had no way of communicating with the rest of the house except through a window, which looked from a considerable height into the garden. A ladder was placed at the window, and a maid servant stood within, and the gardener without, to perform any service that we might require. Miss R. had been much pleased with this temporary non-intercourse, this secure caging of her little birds; it was such an assurance of their not flying away, of which, in one instance at least, the danger had seemed imminent. She did not foresee the calamity that awaited us. Just as the company were entering, and our orchestra beginning a grand concerto, Pastorella, who had succeeded in taking in her stays till she could scarcely breathe in them, between fright and tight lacing, fainted away, and water was immediately called for. The gardener, whose ideas appear to have been rather professional, immediately handed up an enormous watering-pot, brimfull of the pure element, which the housemaid was carrying to the fainting lady, when Miss Jane, darting along with her usual officiousness, and more than her usual speed, in search of a bottle of sal volatil, threw poor Pastorella's own harp right against the well-loaded housemaid, and housemaid, harp, and watering-pot all fell together in the middle of the stage. The crash was startling: and our manager jumped over the foot-lamps to investigate the cause. She found the sick damsel roused by the shock in time to save her laces, and very wisely engaged in washing off her rouge and relieving her heart by a plentiful shower of tears. Housemaid and harp, too, had been picked up unhurt; but the watering-pot was rolling about the stage, and the stage was floated, absolutely under water. The actresses were scudding about to the dry places, full of care for their silks and satins, some clinging to the bower, others climbing the side-scenes, perched amidst boughs and branches, and in great danger of bringing the whole forest about our ears. It was no time for scolding; so the whole chain of delinquents, from the gardener to Miss Jane, escaped unchidden; it was more "germane to the matter" to send for cloths and mops, and warming-pans, and more housemaids, and get the stage dry as soon as possible. The cold water had done us all good; it had diverted our thoughts. Even I, in the midst of my tribulation, forgot for a moment that I was to speak the prologue and to open the play;—alas! only for a moment! Our manager rejoined the company, the curtain drew up, and I advanced to make the famous curtsy, with just such a courage as a coward may assume, who is placed in the van in battle and cannot run away,—the desperate courage of fear. I think I can feel my heart beat now. There was no need of such palpitations. The audience came to be indulgent, and they were so. The prologue went off well; and the play on the whole still better. I have not left room for particular accidents—and how one scene would not go back, or another come forward:—how Laurinda was stranded, and Urania helped her off:—how Pastorella's harp was untuned by the fall and her voice by the crying, and how that untuneable song and the oak-leaf trimming won the heart of a young post-captain, now her happy spouse:—how Florella forgot her crook, and Cleora walked through her train:—these, with other notable incidents, must remain untold. Suffice it that

Euphelia's beauty, Urania's acting, and Zenobie's dancing bore the bell; and that after them, papas and uncles and grandpapas admired each his own.

Years have passed, and that blooming company is scattered far and wide. Some are married; some are dead. But whenever a happy chance throws two or three of us together, the English teacher and her favourite play are sure to be amongst the first, the gayest, and the tenderest of our school-day recollections.

A VISIT TO LUCY.

Lucy, who in her single state bore so striking a resemblance to Jenny Dennison in the number and variety of her lovers, continued to imitate that illustrious original in her married life by her dexterous and excellent management, of which I have been lately an amused and admiring witness. Not having seen her for a long time, tempted by the fineness of the day, the first day of summer, and by the pleasure of carrying to her a little housewifery present from her sometime mistress, we resolved to take a substantial luncheon at two o'clock, and drive over to drink tea with her at five, such being, as we well knew, the fashionable visiting hour at S.

The day was one glow of sunshine, and the road wound through a beautiful mixture of hill and dale and rich woodland, clothed in the brightest foliage, and thickly studded with gentlemen's seats, and prettier cottages, their gardens gay with the blossoms of the plum and the cherry, tossing their snowy garlands across the deep blue sky. So we journeyed on through pleasant villages and shady lanes till we emerged into the opener and totally different scenery of M. Common; a wild district, always picturesque and romantic, but now peculiarly brilliant, and glowing with the luxuriant orange flowers of the furze in its height of bloom, stretching around us like a sea of gold, and loading the very air with its rich almond odour. Who would have believed that this brown, barren, shaggy heath could have assumed such splendour, such majesty? The farther we proceeded, the more beautiful it appeared, the more gorgeous, the more brilliant. Whether climbing up the steep bank, and mixing with the thick plantation of dark firs; or checkered with brown heath or green turf on the open plain, where the sheep and lambs were straying; or circling round the pool covered with its bright white flowers; or edging the dark morass inlaid with the silky tufts of the cotton grass; or creeping down the deep dell where the alders grow; or mixing by the road-side with the shining and varied bark, now white, now purplish, and the light tremulous leaves of the feathery birch-tree;—in every form or variety this furze was beauty itself. We almost lamented to leave it, as we wound down the steep hill of M. West-end, that most picturesque village, with its long open sheds for broom and fagot-making; its little country inn, the Red Lion; its pretty school just in the bottom, where the clear stream comes bubbling over the road, and the romantic foot-bridge is flung across; and with cottages straggling up the hill on the opposite ascent, orchards backed by meadows, and the light wreaths of smoke sailing along the green hill-side, the road winding amidst all, beside another streamlet whose deep rust-coloured scum gives token of a chalybeate spring.

Even this sweet and favourite scene, which, when I would think of the perfection of village landscape, of a spot to live and die in, rises unbidden before my eyes,—this dear and cherished picture, which I generally leave so reluctantly—was hurried over now, so glad were we to emerge once more from its colder colouring into the full glory of the waving furze on S. Common, brighter even than that of M. which we left behind us. Even Lucy's house was unheeded till we drove up to the door, and found to our great satisfaction, that she was at home.

The three years that have elapsed since her marriage, have changed the style of her beauty. She is grown very fat, and rather coarse; and having moreover taken to loud speaking (as I apprehend a village schoolmistress must do in pure self-defence, that her voice may be heard in the *melée*) our airy sparkling soubrette, although still handsome, has been transmuted somewhat suddenly into a bustling merry country dame, looking her full age, if not a little older. It is such a transition as a rosebud experiences when turned into a rose, such as might befall the pretty coquette mistress Anne Page when she wedded Master Fenton and became one of the merry wives of Windsor. Lucy, however, in her dark gown and plain cap (for her dress hath undergone as much alteration as her person,) her smiles and her rosiness, is still as fair a specimen of country comeliness as heart can desire.

We found her very busy, superintending the operations of a certain she-tailor, a lame woman famous for button-holes, who travels from house to house in that primitive district, making and repairing men's gear, and who was at that moment endeavouring to extract a smart waistcoat for our friend the schoolmaster out of a remnant of calico and a blemished waistcoat-piece, which had been purchased at half-price for his behoof by his frugal helpmate. The more material parts of the cutting out had been effected before my arrival, considerably at the expense of the worthy pedagogue's comfort, although to the probable improvement of his shape; for certainly the new

fabric promised to be at least an inch smaller than the pattern;—that point, however, had been by dint of great ingenuity satisfactorily adjusted, and I found the lady of the shears and the lady of the rod in the midst of a dispute on the question of buttons, which the tailoress insisted must be composed of metal or mother of pearl, or any thing but covered moles, inasmuch as there would be no stuff left to cover them; whilst Lucy on her side insisted that there was plenty, that any thing (as all the world knew) would suffice to cover buttons if people were clever and careful, and that certain most diminutive and irregular scraps, which she gathered from the table and under it, and displayed with great ostentation, were amply sufficient for the purpose. "If the pieces are not big enough," continued she, "you have nothing to do but to join them." And as Lucy had greatly the advantage both in loudness of voice and fluency of thought and word, over the itinerant seamstress, who was a woman of slow quiet speech, she carried her point in the argument most triumphantly, although whether the unlucky waistcoat-maker will succeed in stretching her materials so as to do the impossible, remains to be proved, the button question being still undecided when I left S.

Her adversary being fairly silenced, Lucy laid aside her careful thoughts and busy looks; and leaving the poor woman to her sewing and stitching, and a little tidy lass (a sort of half-boarder, who acts half as servant, half as pupil,) to get all things ready for tea, she prepared to accompany me to a pleasant coppice in the neighbourhood, famous for wild lilies of the valley, to the love of which delicate flower, she, not perhaps quite unjustly, attributed my visit.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the wood where they are found, which we reached by crossing first the open common, with its golden waves of furze, and then a clover-field intensely green, deliciously fresh and cool to the eye and the tread. The copse was just in its pleasantest state, having luckily been cut last year, and being too thinly clothed with timber to obstruct the view. It goes sloping down a hill, till it is lost in the green depths of P. Forest, with an abruptness of descent which resembles a series of terraces or rather ledges, so narrow that it is sometimes difficult to find a space on which to walk. The footing is the more precarious, as even the broader paths are intersected and broken by hollows and caves, where the ground has given way and been undermined by fox earths. On the steepest and highest of these banks, in a very dry unsheltered situation, the lily of the valley grows so profusely, that the plants almost cover the ground with their beautiful broad leaves, and the snowy white bells, which envelope the most delicate of odours. All around grow the fragile wind-flowers, pink as well as white; the coral blossoms of the whortle-berry; the graceful wood-sorrel; the pendent drops of the stately Solomon's seal, which hang like waxen tassels under the full and regular leaves; the bright wood-vetch; the unobtrusive woodroof, whose scent is like new hay, and which retains and communicates it when dried; and, lastly, those strange freaks of nature the orchises, where the portrait of an insect is so quaintly depicted in a flower. The bee orchis abounds also in the Maple-Durham woods—those woods where whilome flourished the two stately but unlovely flowers Martha and Teresa Blount of *Popish* fame, and which are still in the possession of their family. But, although it is found at Maple-Durham as well as in these copses of North-Hampshire, yet, in the little slip of Berks which divides Hants from Oxfordshire, I have never been able to discover it. The locality of flowers is a curious puzzle. The field tulip, for instance, through whose superb pendent blossoms checkered with puce and lilac the sun shines as gloriously as through stained glass, and which, blended with a still more elegant white variety, covers whole acres of the Kennet meadows, can by no process be coaxed into another habitation, however apparently similar in situation and soil. Treat them as you may, they pine and die and disappear. The duke of Marlborough only succeeded in naturalizing them at White-Knights by the magnificent operation of transplanting half an acre of meadow, grass and earth and all, to the depth of two feet! and even there they seem dwindling. The wood-sorrel, which I was ambitious of fixing in the shrubberies of our old place, served me the provoking trick of living a year or two, and bearing leaves, but never flowers; and that far rarer but less beautiful plant, the field-star of Bethlehem,—a sort of large hyacinth of the hue of the misletoe, which, in its pale and shadowy stalk and blossom, has something to me awful, unearthly, ghastly, mystical, druidical,—used me still worse, not only refusing to grow in a corner of our orchard where I planted it, but vanishing from the spot where I procured the roots, although I left at least twenty times as many as I took.

Nothing is so difficult to tame as a wild flower; and wisely so, for they generally lose much of their characteristic beauty by any change of soil or situation. That very wood-sorrel now, which I coveted so much, I saw the other day in a green-house! By what chance my fellow amateur persuaded that swamp-loving, cold-braving, shade-seeking plant to blossom in the very region of light, and heat, and dryness, I cannot imagine: but there it was in full bloom, as ugly a little abortion as ever showed its poor face, smaller far than in its native woods, the flowers unveined and colourless, and bolt upright, the

leaves full spread and stiff,—no umbrella fold! no pendent grace! no changing hue! none but a lover's eye would have recognised the poor beauty of the woods in the faded prisoner of the green-house. No caged bird ever underwent such a change. I will never try to domesticate that pretty blossom again—content to visit it in its own lovely haunts, the bed of moss or the beech-root sofa.

The lily of the valley we may perhaps try to transplant. The garden is its proper home; it seems thrown here by accident; we cannot help thinking it an abasement, a condescension. The lily must be transportable. For the present, however, we were content to carry away a basket of blossoms, reserving till the autumn our design of peopling a shady border in our own small territories, the identical border where in summer our geraniums flourish, with that simplest and sweetest of flowers.

We then trudged back to Lucy's to tea, talking by the way of old stories, old neighbours, and old friends—mixed on her part with a few notices of her new acquaintance, lively, shrewd, and good-humoured as usual. She is indeed a most agreeable and delightful person; I think the lately developed quality at which I hinted in my opening remarks, the slight tinge of Jenny-Dennison-ism, only renders her conversation more piquant and individualised, and throws her merits into sharper relief. We talked of old stories and new, and soon found she had lost none of her good gifts in gossipry; of her thousand and one lovers, about whom, although she has quite left off coquetry, she inquired with a kindly interest; of our domestic affairs, and above all of her own. She has no children—a circumstance which I sometimes think she regrets; I do not know why, except that my dear mother having given her on her marriage, amongst a variety of parting gifts, a considerable quantity of baby things, she probably thinks it a pity that they should not be used. And yet the expensiveness of children might console her on the one hand, and the superabundance of them with which she is blest in school-time on the other. Indeed she has now the care of a charity Sunday-school, in addition to her work-day labours—a circumstance which has by no means altered her opinion of the inefficacy and inexpediency of general education.

I suspect that the irregularity of payment is one cause of her dislike to the business; and yet she is so ingenious a contriver in the matter of extracting money's worth from those who have no money, that we can hardly think her unreasonable in requiring the *hen-tailor* to cover buttons out of nothing. Where she can get no cash, she takes the debt in kind; and, as most of her employers are in that predicament, she lives in this respect like the Loochooans, who never heard of a currency. She accommodates herself to this state of things with admirable facility. She has sold her cow, because she found she could be served with milk and butter by the wife of a small farmer who has four children at her school; and has parted with her poultry and pigs, and left off making bread, because the people of both shops are customers to her husband in his capacity of shoemaker, and she gets bread, and eggs, and bacon for nothing. On the same principle she has commenced brewing, because the malster's son and daughter attend her seminary, and she procured three new barrels, coolers, tubs, &c. from a cooper who was in debt to her husband for shoes. "Shoes," or "children," is indeed the constant answer to the civil notice which one is accustomed to take of any novelty in the house. "Shoes" produced the commodious dressing-table and washing-stand, coloured like rose-wood, which adorn her bed-chamber; "children" were the source of the good-as-new roller and wheelbarrow which stand in the court;—and to "shoes and children" united, are they indebted for the excellent double hedge-row of grubbed wood which she took me to see in returning from the copse—"a brand (as she observed) snatched out of the fire; for the poor man who owed them the money must break, and had nothing useful to give them except this wood, which was useless to him as he had not money to get it grubbed up. "If he holds on till the autumn," continued Lucy, "we shall have a good crop of potatoes from the hedge-row. We have planted them on the chance." The ornamental part of her territory comes from the same fertile source.—Even the thrift which adorns the garden (fit emblem of its mistress!) was a present from the drunken gardener of a gentleman in the neighbourhood. "He does not pay his little girl's schooling very regularly," quoth she, "but then he is so civil, poor man! anything in the garden is at our service."

"Shoes and children" are the burden of the song. The united professions re-act on each other in a remarkable manner;—shoes bring scholars, and scholars consume shoes. The very charity school before mentioned, a profitable concern, of which the payment depends on rich people and not on poor, springs indirectly from a certain pair of purple kid boots, a capital fit, (I must do our friend, the pedagogue, the justice to say that he understands the use of his awl, no man better!) which so pleased the vicar's lady, who is remarkable for a neat ankle, that she not only gave a magnificent order for herself, and caused him to measure her children, but actually prevailed on her husband to give the appointment of Sunday school-master to this matchless cordwainer. I should not wonder, if through her powerful patronage, he should one day rise to be parish-clerk.

Well, the tea and the bread and the butter were discussed with the appetite produced by a two hours' ride and a three hours' walk—to

say nothing of the relish communicated to our viands by the hearty hospitality of our hostess, who "gaily pressed and smiled." And then the present, our ostensible errand, a patch-work quilt, long the object of Lucy's admiration, was given with due courtesy, and received with abundance of pleased and blushing thanks.

At last the evening began to draw in, her husband, who had been absent, returned, and we were compelled to set out homewards, and rode back with our basket of lilies through a beautiful twilight world, inhaling the fragrance of the blossomed furze, listening to the nightingales, and talking of Lucy's good management.

DOCTOR TUBB.

Every country village has its doctor. I allude to that particular department of the medical world, which is neither physician nor surgeon, nor apothecary, although it unites the offices of all three; which is sometimes an old man, and sometimes an old woman, but generally an oracle, and always (with reverence be it spoken) a quack. Our village, which is remarkably rich in functionaries, adorned with the true official qualities, could hardly be without so essential a personage. Accordingly we have a quack of the highest and most extended reputation, in the person of Dr. Tubb, inventor and compounder of medicines, bleeder, shaver, and physicker of man and beast.

How this accomplished barber-surgeon came by his fame I do not very well know; his skill he inherited (as I have been told) in the female line, from his great-aunt Bridget, who was herself the first practitioner of the day, the wise woman of the village, and bequeathed to this favourite nephew her blessing, Culpepper's Herbal, a famous salve for cuts and chilblains, and a still.—This legacy decided his fate. A man who possessed a herbal, and could read it without much spelling, who had a still and could use it, had already the great requisites for his calling. He was also blest with a natural endowment, which I take to be at least equally essential to the success of quackery of any sort, especially of medical quackery; namely, a prodigious stock of impudence. Moliere's hero,—who having had the ill-luck to place the heart on the wrong side (I mean the right), and being reminded of his mistake, says coolly, "*nous avons changé tout cela*"—is modesty itself compared with the brazen front of Dr. Tubb. And it tells accordingly. His patients come to him from far and near; he is the celebrated person (*l'homme marquant*) of the place. I myself have heard of him all my life as a distinguished character, although our personal acquaintance is of a comparatively recent date, and began in a manner sufficiently singular and characteristic.

On taking possession of our present abode, about four years ago, we found our garden, and all the gardens of the straggling village-street in which it is situated, filled, peopled, infested by a beautiful flower, which grew in such profusion and was so difficult to keep under, that (poor pretty thing!) instead of being admired and cherished and watered and supported, as it well deserves to be, and would be if it were rare, it is disregarded, affronted, maltreated, cut down, pulled up, hoed out, like a weed. I do not know the name of this elegant plant, nor have I met with any one who does; we call it the Spicer, after an old naval officer who once inhabited the white house, just above, and, according to tradition, first brought the seed from foreign parts. It is a sort of large veronica, with a profusion of white gauzy flowers streaked with red, like the apple-blossom. Strangers admire it prodigiously; and so do I—everywhere but in my own garden.

I never saw any thing prettier than a whole bed of these spicers, which had clothed the top of a large heap of earth belonging to our little mason by the road-side. Whether the wind had carried the light seed from his garden, or it had been thrown out in the mould, none could tell; but there grew the plants as grass in a meadow, and covered with delicate red and white blossoms like a fairy orchard. I never passed them without stopping to look at them; and, however accustomed to the work of extirpation in my own territories, I was one day half shocked to see a man, his pockets stuffed with the plants, two huge bundles under each arm, and still tugging away, root and branch. — "Poor pretty flower," thought I, "not even suffered to enjoy the waste by the road-side! chased from the very common of nature, where the thistle and the nettle may spread and flourish! Poor despised flower!" This devastation did not, however, as I soon found, proceed from disrespect; the spicer-gatherer being engaged in sniffing with visible satisfaction to the leaves and stalks of the plant, which (although the blossom is wholly scentless) emit when bruised a very unpleasant smell. "It has a fine venomous smell," quoth he, in soliloquy, "and will certainly, when stilled, be good for something or other." This was my first sight of Doctor Tubb.

We have frequently met since, and are now well acquainted, although the worthy experimentalist considers me as a rival practitioner, an interloper, and hates me accordingly. He has very little cause. My quackery—for I plead guilty to a little of that aptness to offer counsel in very plain and common cases, which those who live much among poor peo-

ple, and feel an unaffected interest in their health and comfort, can hardly help — my quackery, being mostly of the cautious, preventive, safe side, common sense order, stands no chance against the boldness and decision of his all-promising ignorance. He says, Do! I say, Do not! He deals in *stimuli*, I in sedatives; I give medicine, he gives cordial waters. Alack! alack! when could a dose of rhubarb, even although reinforced by a dole of good broth, compete with a draught of peppermint, a licensed dram? No! no! Doctor Tubb has no cause to fear my practice.

The only patient I ever won from the worthy empiric was his own wife, who had languished under his prescriptions for three mortal years, and at last stole down in the dusk of the evening, to hold a private consultation with me. I was not very willing to invade the doctor's territories in my own person, and really feared to undertake a case which had proved so obstinate; I therefore offered her a ticket for the B. dispensary, an excellent charity, which has rescued many a victim from the clutches of our herbalist. But she said that her husband would never forgive such an affront to his skill, he having an especial aversion to the dispensary and its excellent medical staff, whom he was wont to call "book-doctor;" so that wise measure was perforce abandoned. My next suggestion was more to her taste; I counselled her to "throw physic to the dogs;" she did so, and by the end of the week she was another woman. I never saw such a cure. Her husband never made such a one in all the course of his practice. By the simple expedient of throwing away his decoctions, she is become as strong and hearty as I am. *N. B.* for fear of misconstruction, it is proper to add, that I do not in the least accuse or suspect the worthy doctor of wishing to get rid of his wife—God forbid! He is a tolerable husband, as times go, and performs no murders but in the way of his profession: indeed I think he is glad that his wife should be well again; yet he cannot quite forgive the cause of the cure, and continues boldly to assert in all companies, that it was a newly discovered fomentation of *yarbs*, applied to her by himself about a month before, which produced this surprising recovery; and I really believe that he thinks so; one secret of the implicit confidence which he inspires, is that triumphant reliance on his own infallibility with which he is possessed—the secret perhaps of all creators of enthusiasm, from Mahomet and Cromwell to the

> "Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind
> Believed the magic wonders that he sang."

As if to make some amends to this prescriber-general for the patient of whom I had deprived him, I was once induced to seek his services medically, or rather surgically, for one of my own family,—for no less a person than May, poor pretty May! One November evening, her master being on a coursing visit in Oxfordshire, and May having been left behind as too much fatigued with a recent hard day's work to stand a long dirty journey, (note that a greyhound, besides being exceedingly susceptible of bad weather and watery ways, is a worse traveller than any other dog that breathes; a miserable little pug, or a lady's lap-dog, would, in a progress of fifty miles, tire down the slayer of hares and outrunner of race-horses), — May being, as I said, left behind slightly indisposed, the boy who has the care of her, no less a person than the runaway Henry, came suddenly into the parlour to tell me that she was dying. Now May is not only my pet but the pet of the whole house, so that the news spread universal consternation; there was a sudden rush of the female world to the stable, and a general feeling that Henry was right, when poor May was discovered stretched at full length in a stall, with no other sign of life than a tremendous and visible pulsation of the arteries about her chest—you might almost hear the poor heart beat, so violent was the action.—"Bleeding!" "She must be bled!" burst simultaneously from two of our corps; and immediately her body-servant the boy, who stood compromising his dignity by a very unmanly shower of tears, vanished and re-appeared in a few seconds, dragging Doctor Tubb by the skirts, who, as it was Saturday night, was exercising his tonsorial functions in the tap-room of the Rose, where he is accustomed to operate hebdomadally on half the beards of the parish.

The doctor made his entry apparently with considerable reluctance, enacting for the first and last time in his life the part of *Le Medecin malgré lui*. He held his razor in one hand and a shaving-brush in the other, whilst a barber's apron was tied round the shabby, rusty, out-at-elbow, second-hand, black coat, renewed once in three years, and the still shabbier black breeches, of which his costume usually consists. In spite of my seeming, as I really was glad to see him, a compliment which from me had at least the charm of novelty,—in spite of a very gracious reception, I never saw the man of medicine look more completely astray. He has a pale, meagre, cadaverous face at all times, and a long lank body that seems as if he fed upon his own physic (although it is well known that gin, sheer gin, of which he is by no means sparing, is the only distilled water that finds its way down his throat):—but on this night, between fright —for Henry had taken possession of him without even explaining his errand, — and shame to be dragged into my presence whilst bearing the *insignia* of the least dignified of his professions, his very wig, the identical brown scratch which he wears by way of looking professional, actually stood on end. He was followed by a miscellaneous procession of assistants, very kind, very curious, and

very troublesome, from that noisy neighbour of ours, the well-frequented Rose Inn. First marched mine host, red-waistcoated and jolly as usual, bearing a huge foaming pewter pot of double X, a sovereign cure for all sublunary ills, and lighted by the limping hostler, who tried in vain to keep pace with the swift strides of his master, and held at arm's length before him a smoky horn lantern, which might well be called dark. Next tripped Miss Phœbe (this misadventure happened before the grand event of her marriage with the patten-maker), with a flaring candle in one hand and a glass of cherry-brandy, reserved by her mother for grand occasions, in the other—*autre remède!* Then followed the motley crew of the tap-room, among whom figured my friend Joel, with a woman's apron tied round his neck, and his chin covered with lather, he having been the identical customer—the very shavee, whose beard happened to be under discussion when the unfortunate interruption occurred.

After the bustle and alarm had in some measure subsided, the doctor marched up gravely to poor May, who had taken no sort of notice of the uproar.

"She must be bled!" quoth I.

"She must be fomented and physicked!" quoth the doctor; and he immediately produced from either pocket a huge bundle of dried herbs (perhaps the identical venomous-smelling spicer), which he gave to Miss Phœbe to make a decoction, *secundem artem*, and a huge horse-ball, which he proceeded to divide into boluses;—think of giving a horse-ball to my May!

"She must be bled immediately!" said I.

"She must not!" replied the doctor.

"You shall bleed her!" cried Henry.

"I won't!" rejoined the doctor. "She shall be fo"—*mented* he would have added; but her faithful attendant, thoroughly enraged, screamed out, "She sha'n't" and a regular scolding match ensued, during which both parties entirely lost sight of the poor patient, and mine host of the Rose had nearly succeeded in administering his specific—the double X, which would doubtless have been as fatal as any prescription of licentiate or quack. The worthy landlord had actually forced open her jaws, and was about to pour in the liquor, when I luckily interposed in time to give the ale a more natural direction down his own throat, which was almost as well accustomed to such potations as that of Boniface. He was not at all offended at my rejection of his kindness, but drank to my health and May's recovery with equal good-will.

In the mean time the tumult was ended by my friend, the cricketer, who, seeing the turn which things were taking, and quite regardless of his own plight, ran down the village to the lea, to fetch another friend of mine, an old gamekeeper, who set us all to rights in a moment, cleared the stable of the curious impertinents, flung the horse-ball on the dung-hill, and the decoction into the pond, bled poor May, and turned out the doctor; after which, it is almost needless to say that the patient recovered.

THE BLACK VELVET BAG.

Have any of my readers ever found great convenience in the loss, the real loss, of actual tangible property, and been exceedingly provoked and annoyed when such property was restored to them? If so, they can sympathize with a late unfortunate recovery, which has brought me to great shame and disgrace. There is no way of explaining my calamity but by telling the whole story.

Last Friday fortnight was one of those anomalies in weather with which we English people are visited for our sins; a day of intolerable wind, and insupportable dust; an equinoctial gale out of season; a piece of March unnaturally foisted into the very heart of May; just as, in the almost parallel misarrangement of the English counties, one sees (perhaps out of compliment to this peculiarity of climate, to keep the weather in countenance as it were) a bit of Wiltshire plumped down in the very middle of Berkshire, whilst a great island of the county palatine of Durham figures in the centre of canny Northumberland. Be this as it may, on that remarkable windy day did I set forth to the good town of B., on the feminine errand, called shopping. Every lady who lives far in the country, and seldom visits great towns, will understand the full force of that comprehensive word; and I had not been a shopping for a long time: I had a dread of the operation, arising from a consciousness of weakness. I am a true daughter of Eve, a dear lover of bargains and bright colours; and knowing this, have generally been wise enough to keep, as much as I can, out of the way of temptation. At last a sort of necessity arose for some slight purchases, in the shape of two new gowns from London, which cried aloud for making. Trimmings, ribands, sewing-silk, and lining, all were called for. The shopping was inevitable, and I undertook the whole concern at once, most heroically resolving to spend just so much, and no more; and half-comforting myself that I had a full morning's work of indispensable business, and should have no time for extraneous extravagance.

There was, to be sure, a prodigious accumulation of errands and wants. The evening before, they had been set down in great form, on a slip of paper, headed thus—"things wanted."—To how many and various catalogues that title would apply, from the red bench of the peer, to the oaken settle of the

cottager—from him who wants a blue riband, to him who wants bread and cheese! My list was astounding. It was written in double columns, in an invisible hand; the long intractable words were brought into the ranks by the Procrustes mode—abbreviation; and, as we approached the bottom, two or three were crammed into one lot, clumped, as the bean-setters say, and designated by a sort of short-hand, a hieroglyphic of my own invention. In good open printing my list would have cut a respectable figure as a catalogue, too; for, as I had a given sum to carry to market, I amused myself with calculating the proper and probable cost of every article; in which process I most egregiously cheated the shopkeeper and myself, by copying, with the credulity of hope, from the puffs in the newspapers, and expecting to buy fine solid wearable goods at advertising prices. In this way I stretched my money a great deal farther than it would go, and swelled my catalogue; so that, at last, in spite of compression and short-hand, I had no room for another word, and was obliged to crowd several small but important articles, such as cotton, laces, pins, needles, shoe-strings, &c. into that very irregular and disorderly storehouse—that place where most things deposited are lost—*my memory*, by courtesy so called.

The written list was safely consigned, with a well-filled purse, to my usual repository, a black velvet bag; and, the next morning, I and my bag, with its nicely-balanced contents of wants and money, were safely conveyed in a little open carriage to the good town of B. There I dismounted, and began to bargain most vigorously, visiting the cheapest shops, cheapening the cheapest articles, yet wisely buying the strongest and the best; a little astonished at first, to find everything so much dearer than I had set it down, yet soon reconciled to this misfortune by the magical influence which shopping possesses over a woman's fancy—all the sooner reconciled, as the monitory list lay unlooked at, and unthought of, in its grave receptacle, the black velvet bag. On I went, with an air of cheerful business, of happy importance, till my money began to wax small. Certain small aberrations had occurred, too, in my economy. One article that had happened, by rare accident, to be below my calculation, and, indeed, below any calculation, calico at ninepence, fine, thick, strong, wide calico at ninepence, (did ever man hear of anything so cheap?) absolutely enchanted me, and I took the whole piece: then, after buying for M. a gown, according to order, I saw one that I liked better, and bought that, too. Then I fell in love, was actually captivated by a sky-blue sash and handkerchief,—not the poor, thin, greeny colour which usually passes under that dishonoured name, but the rich, full tint of the noon-day sky; and a cap-riband, really pink, that might have vied with the inside leaves of a moss-rose. Then, in hunting after cheapness, I got into obscure shops, where, not finding what I asked for, I was fain to take something that they had, purely to make a proper compensation for the trouble of lugging out drawers, and answering questions.—Lastly, I was fairly coaxed into some articles by the irresistibility of the sellers,—by the demure and truth-telling look of a pretty Quaker, who could almost have persuaded the head off one's shoulders, and who did persuade me that ell-wide muslin would go as far as yard and a half: and by the fluent impudence of a lying shopman, who, under cover of a well-darkened window, affirmed, on his honour, that his brown satin was a perfect match to my green pattern, and forced the said satin down my throat accordingly. With these helps, my money melted all too fast: at half past five my purse was entirely empty; and, as shopping with an empty purse has by no means the relish and savour of shopping with a full one, I was quite willing and ready to go home to dinner, pleased as a child with my purchases, and wholly unsuspecting the sins of omission, the errands unperformed, which were the natural result of my unconsulted *memoranda* and my treacherous memory.

Home I returned, a happy and proud woman, wise in my own conceit, a thrifty fashion-monger, laden, like a pedlar, with huge packages in stout brown holland, tied up with whipcord, and genteel little parcels, papered and packthreaded in shopmanlike style. At last we were safely stowed in the pony-chaise, which had much ado to hold us, my little black bag lying, as usual, in my lap; when, as we ascended the steep hill out of B., a sudden puff of wind took at once my cottage-bonnet and my large cloak, blew the bonnet off my head, so that it hung behind me, suspended by the riband, and fairly snapped the string of the cloak, which flew away, much in the style of John Gilpin's, renowned in story.—My companion pitying my plight, exerted himself manfully to regain the fly-away garments, shoved the head into the bonnet, or the bonnet over the head (I do not know which phrase best describes the manœuvre,) with one hand, and recovered the refractory cloak with the other. This last exploit was certainly the most difficult. It is wonderful what a tug he was forced to give, before that obstinate cloak could be brought round: it was swelled with the wind like a bladder, animated, so to say, like a living thing, and threatened to carry pony and chaise, and riders and packages, backwards down the hill, as if it had been a sail, and we a ship. At last the contumacious garment was mastered. We righted; and, by dint of sitting sideways, and turning my back on my kind comrade, I got home without any farther damage than the loss of my bag, which, though not missed before the chaise

had been unloaded, had undoubtedly gone by the board in the gale; and I lamented my old and trusty companion, without in the least foreseeing the use it would probably be of to my reputation.

Immediately after dinner (for in all cases, even when one has bargains to show, dinner must be discussed) I produced my purchases. They were much admired; and the quantity, when spread out in our little room, being altogether dazzling, and the quality satisfactory, the cheapness was never doubted. — Everybody thought the bargains were exactly such as I meant to get—for nobody calculated; and the bills being really lost in the lost bag, and the particular prices just as much lost in my memory (the ninepenny calico was the only article whose cost occurred to me,) I passed, without telling anything like a fib, merely by a discreet silence, for the best and thriftiest bargainer that ever went shopping. After some time spent very pleasantly, in admiration on one side, and display on the other, we were interrupted by the demand for some of the little articles which I had forgotten. — "The sewing-silk, please ma'am, for my mistress's gown." "Sewing-silk! I don't know — look about." Ah, she might look long enough!—no sewing-silk was there.—"Very strange!" Presently came other inquiries— "Where's the tape, Mary?" "The tape!" "Yes, my dear; and the needles, pins, cotton, stay-laces, boot-laces;" — "the bobbin, the ferret, shirt-buttons, shoe-strings?" quoth she of the sewing-silk, taking up the cry; and forthwith began a search as bustling, as active, and as vain, as that of our old spaniel, Brush, after a hare that has stolen away from her form. At last she suddenly desisted from her rummage—"Without doubt, ma'am, they are in the reticule, and all lost," said she, in a very pathetic tone. "Really," cried I, a little conscience-stricken, "I don't recollect;—perhaps I might forget." "Depend on it, my love, that Harriet's right," interrupted one whose injunctions are always kind; "those are just the little articles that people put in reticules, and you never could forget so many things; besides, you wrote them down." "I don't know—I am not sure."—But I was not listened to;—Harriet's conjecture had been metamorphosed into a certainty; all my sins of omission were stowed in the reticule; and, before bed-time, the little black bag held forgotten things enough to fill a sack.

Never was a reticule so lamented by all but its owner; a boy was immediately despatched to look for it, and on his return empty-handed, there was even a talk of having it cried. My care, on the other hand, was all directed to prevent its being found. I had the good luck to lose it in a suburb of B. renowned for filching, and I remembered that the street was, at that moment, full of people: the bag did actually contain more than enough to tempt those who were naturally disposed to steal for stealing's sake; so I went to bed in the comfortable assurance that it was gone for ever. But there is nothing certain in this world—not even a thief's dishonesty. Two old women, who had pounced at once on my valuable property, quarrelled about the plunder, and one of them, in a fit of resentment at being cheated in her share, went to the mayor of B. and informed against her companion. The mayor, an intelligent and active magistrate, immediately took the disputed bag, and all its contents, into his own possession; and as he is also a man of great politeness, he restored it as soon as possible to the right owner. The very first thing that saluted my eyes, when I awoke in the morning, was a note from Mr. Mayor, with a sealed packet. The fatal truth was visible; I had recovered my reticule, and lost my reputation.—There it lay, that identical black bag, with its name-tickets, its cambric handkerchief, its empty purse, its unconsulted list, its thirteen bills, and its two letters; one from a good sort of lady-farmer, inquiring the character of a cook, with half a sonnet written on the blank pages; the other from a literary friend, containing a critique on the plot of a play, advising me not to kill the king too soon, with other good counsel, such as might, if our mayor had not been a man of sagacity, have sent a poor authoress, in a Mademoiselle-Scuderi-mistake, to the Tower. That catastrophe would hardly have been worse than the real one. All my omissions have been found out. My price-list has been compared with the bills. I have forfeited my credit for bargaining. I am become a by-word for forgetting. Nobody trusts me to purchase a paper of pins, or to remember the cost of a penny riband. I am a lost woman. My bag is come back, but my fame is gone.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE DELL.

May 2d.—A delicious evening; bright sunshine; light summer air; a sky almost cloudless; and a fresh yet delicate verdure on the hedges and in the fields: — an evening that seems made for a visit to my newly-discovered haunt, the mossy dell, one of the most beautiful spots in the neighbourhood, which, after passing times out of number the field which it terminates, we found out about two months ago, from the accident of May's killing a rabbit there. May has had a fancy for the place ever since; and so have I.

Thither, accordingly, we bend our way; through the village;—up the hill;—along the common;— past the avenue;— across the bridge; and by the mill. How deserted the

road is to-night! We have not seen a single acquaintance, except poor blind Robert, laden with his sack of grass plucked from the hedges, and the little boy that leads him. A singular division of labour! Little Jem guides Robert to the spot where the long grass grows, and tells him where it is most plentiful; and then the old man cuts it close to the roots, and between them they fill the sack and sell the contents in the village. Half the cows in the street—for our baker, our wheelwright, and our shoemaker, has each his Alderney—owe the best part of their maintenance to blind Robert's industry.

Here we are at the entrance of the corn-field which leads to the dell, and which commands so fine a view of the Loddon, the mill, the great farm, with its picturesque outbuildings, and the range of woody hills beyond. It is impossible not to pause a moment at that gate, the landscape, always beautiful, is so suited to the season and the hour,—so bright, and gay, and spring-like. But May, who has the chance of another rabbit in her pretty head, has galloped forward to the dingle, and poor May, who follows me so faithfully in all my wanderings, has a right to a little indulgence in hers. So to the dingle we go.

At the end of the field, which when seen from the road seems terminated by a thick dark coppice, we come suddenly to the edge of a ravine, on one side fringed with a low growth of alder, birch, and willow, on the other mossy, turfy, and bare, or only broken by bright tufts of blossomed broom. One or two old pollards almost conceal the winding road that leads down the descent, by the side of which a spring as bright as crystal runs gurgling along. The dell itself is an irregular piece of broken ground, in some parts very deep, intersected by two or three high banks of equal irregularity, now abrupt and bare and rocklike, now crowned with tufts of the feathery willow or magnificent old thorns. Everywhere the earth is covered by short fine turf, mixed with mosses, soft, beautiful, and various, and embossed with the speckled leaves and lilac flowers of the arum, the paler blossoms of the common orchis, the enamelled blue of the wild hyacinth, so splendid in this evening light, and large tufts of oxlips and cowslips rising like nosegays from the short turf.

The ground on the other side of the dell is much lower than the field through which we came, so that it is mainly to the labyrinthine intricacy of these high banks that it owes its singular character of wildness and variety. Now we seem hemmed in by those green cliffs, shut out from all the world, with nothing visible but those verdant mounds and the deep blue sky; now by some sudden turn we get a peep at an adjoining meadow where the sheep are lying, dappling its sloping surface like the small clouds on the summer heaven. Poor harmless quiet creatures, how still they are! Some socially lying side by side; some grouped in threes and fours; some quite apart. Ah! there are lambs amongst them—pretty, pretty lambs!—nestled in by their mothers. Soft, quiet, sleepy things! Not all so quiet though! There is a party of these young lambs as wide awake as heart can desire; half a dozen of them playing together, frisking, dancing, leaping, butting, and crying in the young voice, which is so pretty a diminutive of the full-grown bleat. How beautiful they are with their innocent spotted faces, their mottled feet, their long curly tails, and their light flexible forms, frolicking like so many kittens, but with a gentleness, an assurance of sweetness and innocence which no kitten, nothing that ever is to be a cat, can have. How complete and perfect is their enjoyment of existence! Ah! little rogues! your play has been too noisy; you have awakened your mammas; and two or three of the old ewes are getting up; and one of them marching gravely to the troop of lambs has selected her own, given her a gentle butt, and trotted off; the poor rebuked lamb following meekly, but every now and then stopping and casting a longing look at its playmates; who, after a moment's awed pause, had resumed their gambols; whilst the stately dam every now and then looked back in her turn, to see that her little one was following. At last she lay down and the lamb by her side. I never saw so pretty a pastoral scene in my life.*

Another turning of the dell gives a glimpse of the dark coppice by which it is backed, and from which we are separated by some marshy, rushy ground, where the springs have formed into a pool, and where the moor-hen loves to

*I have since seen one which affected me much more. Walking in the Church-lane with one of the young ladies of the vicarage, we met a large flock of sheep with the usual retinue of shepherds and dogs. Lingering after them and almost out of sight, we encountered a straggling ewe, now trotting along, now walking, and every now and then stopping to look back and bleating. A little behind her came a lame lamb, bleating occasionally, as if in answer to its dam, and doing its very best to keep up with her. It was a lameness of both the fore feet; the knees were bent, and it seemed to walk on the very edge of the hoof—on tip-toe, if I may venture such an expression. My young friend thought that the lameness proceeded from original malformation: I am rather of opinion that it was accidental, and that the poor creature was wretchedly foot-sore. However that might be, the pain and difficulty with which it took every step were not to be mistaken; and the distress and fondness of the mother, her perplexity as the flock passed gradually out of sight, the effort with which the poor lamb contrived to keep up a sort of trot, and their mutual calls and lamentations were really so affecting, that Ellen and I, although not at all larmoyante sort of people, had much ado not to cry. We could not find a boy to carry the lamb, which was too big for us to manage; but I was quite sure that the ewe would not desert it, and as the dark was coming on, we both trusted that the shepherds on folding their flock would miss them and return for them; and so I am happy to say it proved.

build her nest. Ay, there is one scudding away now;—I can hear her plash into the water, and the rustling of her wings amongst the rushes. This is the deepest part of the wild dingle. How uneven the ground is! Surely these excavations, now so thoroughly clothed with vegetation, must originally have been huge gravel-pits; there is no other way of accounting for the labyrinth, for they do dig gravel in such capricious meanders; but the quantity seems incredible. Well! there is no end of guessing! We are getting amongst the springs, and must turn back. Round this corner, where on ledges like fairy terraces the orchises and arums grow, and we emerge suddenly on a new side of the dell, just fronting the small homestead of our good neighbour Farmer Allen.

This rustic dwelling belongs to what used to be called in this part of the country "a little bargain:" thirty or forty acres, perhaps, of arable land, which the owner and his sons cultivated themselves, whilst the wife and daughters assisted in the husbandry and eked out the slender earnings by the produce of the dairy, the poultry-yard and the orchard; an order of cultivators now passing rapidly away, but in which much of the best part of the English character, its industry, its frugality, its sound sense, and its kindness might be found. Farmer Allen himself is an excellent specimen, the cheerful venerable old man with his long white hair, and his bright grey eye; and his wife is a still finer. They have had a hard struggle to win through the world and keep their little property undivided; but good management and good principles and the assistance afforded them by an admirable son, who left our village a poor 'prentice boy, and is now a partner in a great house in London, have enabled them to overcome all the difficulties of these trying times, and they are now enjoying the peaceful evening of a well-spent life, as free from care and anxiety as their best friends could desire.

Ah! there is Mrs. Allen in the orchard, the beautiful orchard, with its glorious garlands of pink and white, its pearly pear-blossoms and coral apple buds. What a flush of bloom it is! How brightly delicate it appears, thrown into strong relief by the dark house and the weather-stained barn, in this soft evening light. The very grass is strewed with the snowy petals of the pear and the cherry. And there sits Mrs. Allen, feeding her poultry, with her three little grand-daughters from London, pretty fairies from three years old to five (only two and twenty months elapsed between the birth of the eldest and the youngest) playing round her feet.

Mrs. Allen, my dear Mrs. Allen, has been that rare thing a beauty, and although she be now an old woman, I had almost said that she is so still. Why should I not say so? Nobleness of feature and sweetness of expression are surely as delightful in age as in youth. Her face and figure are much like those which are stamped indelibly on the memory of every one who ever saw that grand specimen of woman, Mrs. Siddons. The outline of Mrs. Allen's face is exactly the same; but there is more softness, more gentleness, a more feminine composure in the eye and in the smile. Mrs. Allen never played Lady Macbeth. Her hair, almost as black as at twenty, is parted on her large fair forehead and combed under her exquisitely neat and snowy cap. A muslin neck-kerchief, a grey stuff gown, and a white apron complete the picture.

There she sits under an old elder tree which flings its branches over her like a canopy, whilst the setting sun illumines her venerable figure and touches the leaves with an emerald light; there she sits placid and smiling, with her spectacles in her hand and a measure of barley on her lap, into which the little girls are dipping their chubby hands and scattering the corn amongst the ducks and chickens with unspeakable glee. But those ingrates the poultry don't seem so pleased and thankful as they ought to be; they mistrust their young feeders. All domestic animals dislike children, partly from an instinctive fear of their tricks and their thoughtlessness, partly, I suspect, from jealousy. Jealousy seems a strange tragic passion to attribute to the inmates of the basse cour,—but only look at that strutting fellow of a bantam cock (evidently a favourite) who sidles up to his old mistress with an air half affronted and half tender, turning so scornfully from the barley-corns which Annie is flinging towards him, and say if he be not as jealous as Othello? Nothing can pacify him but Mrs. Allen's notice and a dole from her hand. See, she is calling to him and feeding him, and now how he swells out his feathers, and flutters his wings, and erects his glossy neck, and struts and crows and pecks, proudest and happiest of bantams, the pet and glory of the poultry-yard!

In the mean time my own pet May, who has all this while been peeping into every hole, and penetrating every nook and winding of the dell, in hopes to find another rabbit, has returned to my side and is sliding her snake-like head into my hand, at once to invite the caress which she likes so well, and to intimate with all due respect that it is time to go home. The setting sun gives the same warning; and in a moment we are through the dell, the field and the gate, past the farm and the mill, and hanging over the bridge that crosses the Loddon river.

What a sunset! how golden! how beautiful! The sun just disappearing, and the narrow liny clouds which a few minutes ago lay like soft vapoury streaks along the horizon lighted up with a golden splendour that the eye can scarcely endure, and those still softer clouds which floated above them wreathing

and curling into a thousand fantastic forms, as thin and changeful as summer smoke, now defined and deepened into grandeur and edged with ineffable, insufferable light! Another minute and the brilliant orb totally disappears, and the sky above grows every moment more varied and more beautiful as the dazzling golden lines are mixed with glowing red and gorgeous purple, dappled with small dark specks and mingled with such a blue as the egg of the hedge-sparrow. To look up at that glorious sky, and then to see that magnificent picture reflected in the clear and lovely Loddon water, is a pleasure never to be described and never forgotten. My heart swells and my eyes fill as I write of it, and think of the immeasurable majesty of nature, and the unspeakable goodness of God, who has spread an enjoyment so pure, so peaceful, and so intense, before the meanest and the lowliest of His creatures.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

FRENCH EMIGRANTS.

During the time that I spent at school, I was in the habit of passing the interval, from Saturday afternoon to Monday morning, at the house of a female relative who resided in London. This lady had married a French emigrant of high family, who, being a man of sense and ability, applied himself with diligence to mercantile pursuits, dropped his title, anglicised his name and habits, and, by dint of his own talents and his wife's fortune, soon became a thriving man on 'Change. I believe he would have been very sorry to exchange his new station for his old, his credit at Lloyd's for his marquisate, his house in Brunswick-square for his Norman chateau, or his little wife for any thing. He was become at all points an Englishman, ate roast-beef and plum-pudding with a truly national relish, drank Port wine and porter, spoke our language almost like a native, read Pope, talked of Shakspeare, and pretended to read Milton. Could complaisance go farther?

He did not, however, in his love for his adopted country, forget that in which he was born: still less did he neglect the friends and countrymen, who, less fortunate than himself, languished in London and the suburbs in a miserable and apparently hopeless poverty. Nothing could exceed the kindness and politeness, with which all whom he had ever known, and many who were now first introduced to him, were received by himself and his good little wife at their hospitable table. Seldom a day passed without one or more guests dropping in, sure of the most cordial welcome; but Saturday was the regular French day; on that day there was always a *petit souper* for Mr. S.'s especial coterie; and in the evening the conversation, music, games, manners, and cookery, were studiously and decidedly French. Trictrac superseded chess or backgammon, reversi took the place of whist, Gretry of Mozart, Racine of Shakspeare; omelettes and salads, Champagne moussu, and *eau sucré*, excluded sandwiches, oysters, and porter.

At these suppers their little school-girl visiter of course assisted, though at first rather in the French than the English sense of the word. I was present indeed, but had as little to do as possible either with speaking or eating. To talk French and to discuss French dishes (two evils which I constantly classed together) seemed to me an actual insult on that glorious piece of British freedom, a half-holiday, — a positive attack on the liberty of the subject. Accordingly, as far as a constant repetition of blushing noes (not *nons*) inwardly angry and outwardly shy, could proclaim my displeasure, I did not fail. Luckily the sentiment was entirely unsuspected by every one but my good cousin, a person of admirable sense, who by dint of practising the let-alone system (the best system of all when prejudice is to be overcome,) aided by a little innocent artifice on her part, and something of latent curiosity, abetted by the keenness of a girlish appetite, on mine, succeeded in passing off a slice of a superb *tête du sanglier* for a new sort of Oxford brawn; and then, as in the matter of heads and suppers *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*, left it to my own senses to discover the merits of brioche and marrangles and eau de groseille. In less than three months I became an efficient consumer of good things, left off my noes and my sulkiness, and said "oui, monsieur," and, "merci, madame," as often as a little girl of twelve years old ought to say any thing.

I confess, however, that it took more time to reconcile me to the party round the table, than to the viands with which it was covered. In truth they formed a motley group, reminded me now of a masquerade and then of a puppet-show; and, although I had been brought up in habits of proper respect for rank and age and poverty, yet there were contrasts and combinations about these coteries too ridiculous not to strike irresistibly the fancy of an acute observing girl, whose perception of the ridiculous was rendered keener by an invincible shyness which confined the enjoyment entirely to her own breast. The etiquette, the rouge, the coquetry, the self-importance of these poor draggle-tailed duchesses and countesses; the buttoned-up crosses, the bows and shrugs of their out-at-elbow dukes and counts; their mutual flatteries, their court jealousies and court hatreds, buttoned up like the crosses, but like them peeping out from the breast, the total oblivion which pervaded the whole party of poor

England and all its concerns, the manner in which they formed a little nation in the midst of London, and the comfortable vanity which thought and called that little circle of emigrants the great nation; all this, together with the astounding rapidity and clatter of tongues, the vehemence of gesticulation, and the general sharp and withered look of so many foreign faces, working in every variety of strong expression, formed a picture so new and amusing, that I may be pardoned if I did not at first fully appreciate the good-humoured resignation, the cheerful philosophy, which bore all that they had lost so well, and found so much comfort in the little that remained; the happy art of making the best of things, which rendered even their harmless personal vanity, their pride in a lost station, and their love of a country which they might never see again, pleasant and respectable.

At first I only looked on them in the group; but I soon learned to individualize the more constant visiters, those who had been, ten years before, accustomed to spend their evenings in the superb hotel of the Duchess D***, glittering with gilding and lined with mirrors, and whose gayest and most splendid meetings were now held in the plain undecorated drawing-room of a substantial merchant in Brunswick-square. I shall attempt to sketch a few of them as they then appeared to me, beginning, as etiquette demands, with the duchess.

She was a tall meagre woman, of a certain age (that is to say, on the wrong side of sixty), with the peculiarly bad unsteady walk, something between a trip and a totter, that Frenchwomen of rank used to acquire from their high heels and the habit of never using their feet. Her face bore the remains of beauty, and would still have been handsome, had not the thin cheeks and hollow eyes, and the pale trembling lips contrasted almost to ghastliness by a quantity of glaring rouge, and very white teeth, constantly displayed by a smile originally, perhaps, artificial, but which long habit had rendered natural. Her dress was always simple in its materials, and delicately clean. She meant the fashion to be English, I believe,—at least she used often to say, "*me voilà mise à l'Angloise;*" but as neither herself, nor her faithful *femme de chambre*, could or would condescend to seek for patterns from *les grosses bourgeoises de ce Londres là bas*, they unconsciously relapsed into the old French shapes; and madame la duchesse, in her hideous shrouding cap, with frills like flounces, and her long-waisted, pigeon-breasted gown, might really have served for a model of the fashion of Paris at the epoch of the emigration. Notwithstanding these take-offs, our good duchess had still the air of a lady of rank and a gentlewoman,—a French gentlewoman; for there was too much coquetry and affectation, too pervading a consciousness, for English gentility. Her manner was very pleasant and affable towards her usual associates, and with strangers, condescending, protecting, gracious; making remarks and asking questions without waiting for answers, in the manner usual with crowned heads. She contracted this habit from having at one time of her life enjoyed great influence at court,—an influence which, with her other advantages of rank and fortune, had been used so kindly as to retain friends and secure gratitude even in the heat of the Revolution.—Most amply did she repay this gratitude. It was beautiful to hear the ardent thankfulness with which she would relate the story of her escape, and the instances of goodness and devotion which met her at every step. She accounted herself the most fortunate of women, for having, in company with a faithful *femme de chambre*, at last contrived to reach England, with jewels enough concealed about their persons to purchase an annuity sufficient to secure them a snug apartment up two pair of stairs in a retired street, and to keep them in soups and salad, with rouge and snuff into the bargain. No small part of her good fortune was the vicinity of her old friend, the Marquis L., a little thin withered old man, with a prodigious mobility of shoulders and features, a face puckered with wrinkles, and a prodigious volubility of tongue.—This gentleman had been madame's devoted beau for the last forty years;—I speak it in all honour, for, beautiful as she had been, the breath of scandal never glanced on the fair fame of the duchess. They could not exist without an interchange of looks and sentiments, a mutual intelligence, a gentle gallantry on the one side, and a languishing listening on the other, which long habit had rendered as necessary to both as their snuff-box or their coffee. It really was a peculiar stroke of good fortune, that, after a separation of eight months, each fearing that the other had fallen by the guillotine, caused them to take lodgings in adjoining streets in the same parish.

The next person in importance to the duchess was Madame de V., sister to the marquis. Perhaps (though she had never filled a tabouret at Versailles,*) she was, in the existing state of things, rather the greater lady of the two. Her husband, who had acted in a diplomatic capacity in the stormy days preceding the Revolution, still maintained his station at the exiled court, and was, at the moment of which I write, employed on a secret embassy to an unnamed potentate; some thought one emperor or king, some another, some guessed the pope, and some the grand seignor; for, in the dearth of Bourbon news, this mysterious mission excited a lively and animated curiosity amongst these sprightly people. It was a pretty puzzle for them, a

* A privilege annexed to the rank of duchess; that of being seated in the royal presence.

conundrum to their taste. Madame kept the secret well,—if she knew it. I rather suspect she did not; she talked so very much that it certainly would have escaped her. In person she was quite a contrast to the duchess; short, very crooked, with the sharp odd-looking face and keen eye that so often accompany deformity. She added to these good gifts a prodigious quantity of rouge and finery, mingling ribands, feathers, and beads of all the colours of the rainbow, with as little scruple as a *belle* of the South Seas would discover in the choice of her decorations. She was on excellent terms with all who knew her, unless, perhaps, there might be a little jealousy of station between her and the duchess, who had no great affection for one who seemed likely to "push her from her stool." She was also on the best possible terms with herself, in spite of the looking-glass, whose testimony, indeed, was so positively contradicted by certain couplets and acrostics addressed to her by M. le Comte de C., and the Chevalier des I., the poets of the party, that to believe one uncivil dumb thing against two witnesses of such undoubted honour, would have been a breach of politeness of which madame was incapable. —Notwithstanding this piece of womanish blindness, she was an excellent person, a good sister, good mother, and good wife.

Of the Comte de C., I shall say nothing, except that he was a poet, and the most remarkable individual of the party, being more like a personification of a German play, than a living man of flesh and blood. His contradictions and oddities quite posed me at the ripe age of twelve; but the gentleman was a poet, and that, as poor madame used to say, accounts for every thing.

His wife was just such a person as Rubens has often painted, tall, large, and finely complexioned. She would have been very handsome but for one terrible drawback; — she squinted; not much, not glaringly; it was a very little squint, the least in the world, but a squint it certainly was, quite enough to diminish the lustre of her beauty. Even when from the position of her face we happened not to see it, the consciousness that there it was, broke the charm. I cannot abide these "cross-eyes," as the country people call them; though I have heard of ladies who, from the spirit of partisanship, admired those of Mr. Wilkes. The French gentlemen did not seem to participate in my antipathy; for the countess was regarded as the beauty of the party. Agreeable she certainly was; lively, witty, abounding in repartee and innocent mischief, playing off a variety of amusing follies herself, and bearing with great philosophy the eccentricities of her husband. She had also an agreeable little dog called Amour; a pug, the smallest and ugliest of the species, who regularly after supper used to jump out of a muff, where he had lain perdu all the evening, and make the round of the supper-table, begging cakes and biscuits. He and I had established a great friendship; he regularly, after levying his contributions all round, came to me for a game at play, and sometimes carried his partiality so far, as on hearing my voice to pop his poor little black nose out of his hiding-place before the appointed time. It required several repetitions of *Fi donc* from his mistress to drive him back behind the scenes till she gave him his cue.

No uncommon object of her wit was the mania of a smug and smooth-faced little abbé, the politician *par eminence*, where all were politicians, just as Madame de V. was the talker amongst a tribe of talkers. M. l'Abbé must have been an exceeding bore to our English ministers, whom by his own showing he pestered weekly with laboured memorials, — plans for a rising in La Vendée, schemes for an invasion, proposals to destroy the French fleet, offers to take Antwerp, and plots for carrying off Buonaparte from the opera-house, and lodging him in the Tower of London. This last was his favourite project; and well it might be, for a bolder idea never entered the mind of man. Imagine the abduction of the emperor, in the midst of his court and guards and his good city of Paris! Fancy him carried off by the unassisted prowess and dexterity of M. l'Abbé, and deposited in the Tower, like a piece of old armour, or a lion newly caught, whilst all France was staring and running about in search of her ruler, like the Harlowe family after the *enlèvement* of Miss Clarissa! What a master-stroke would this have been! Ministers, as he used to complain, refused to avail themselves of this brilliant idea, thereby prolonging the war and incurring a needless waste of lives and treasure. Indeed any little misfortune that befell our government, the sinking of an East-Indiaman, the failure of an expedition, or the loss of a motion, was commonly ascribed by him to the neglect of his advice; whilst, on the other hand, any eminent success in the cabinet, the parliament, or the field, was pretty sure to be traced up by him to some one of his numerous suggestions. Of the victory at Trafalgar, for instance, we English people have generally attributed the merit to the great commander who fell in the fight; but (I do not exactly remember on what score) he claimed full half of the honour; and doubtless he ascribes the campaigns in Spain, the frost in Russia, the burning of Moscow, the capture of Paris, the crowning victory at Waterloo, and the restoration and establishment of the Bourbons, in a great measure, if not wholly, to the effect of his counsels. I would lay a wager that he is at this moment wasting reams of paper in memorialising the French government on this subject, as well as favouring them with hints on any other that falls in his way. In the matter of advice and projects, his libe-

rality is unbounded. He alone, of all the Brunswick-square coterie, condescended to bestow the slightest attention on English affairs, and had the goodness to apply himself with unfeigned earnestness to the improvement of our condition. Thus, whilst one pocket was filled with proposals to cut off the French army, and schemes to blow up the Tuilleries, (for though one of the most benevolent and mild-tempered men on earth, he was a perfect Guy Faux on paper,) the other was crammed with plans to pay off the national debt, thoughts on the commutation of tithes, and hints for a general enclosure bill. He had usually some little private projects too, and many an unwary fellow-speculator hath rued his patents for making coals better than those of Newcastle out of dirt and ashes, his improved Argand lamps, and self-working fishing-nets. In short, he was a thorough projector, one that "never was, but always to be," rich; quick, imaginative, plausible, eloquent, and the more dangerous because he was thoroughly honest, and had himself an entire faith in one scheme, till it was chased away by another,—a bubble like the rest!

Then came the chevalier des I.—

> ——————"By my life,
> That Davies hath a mighty pretty wife!"

The chevalier was a handsome man himself, tall, dark-visaged and whiskered, with a look rather of the new than of the old French school, fierce and soldierly; he was accomplished, too, in his way, played the flute, and wrote songs and enigmas; but his wife was undoubtedly the most remarkable thing belonging to him; not that she was a beauty either; I should rather call her the prettiest of pretty women; she was short, well-made, with fine black eyes, long glossy black hair, a clear brown complexion, a cocked-up nose, red lips, white teeth, and a most bewitching dimple. There was a tasteful smartness in her dress, which with a *gentillesse* in her hair, and a piquancy of expression, at once told her country, and gave a promise of intelligence and feeling. No one could look at her without being persuaded that she was equally sensible and lively; but no one could listen to her without discovering the mistake. She was the silliest Frenchwoman I ever encountered,—I have met with some as stupid among my own countrywomen; Heaven forbid that we should in any thing yield the palm to our neighbours! She never opened her lips without uttering some *bêtise*. Her poor husband, himself not the wisest of men, quite dreaded her speaking; for, besides that he was really fond of her, he knew that the high-born circle of which she formed a part, would be particularly on the watch for her mistakes, as she was *roturière*, the daughter of a farmer-general, who had fallen a sacrifice to the inhuman tyranny of Robespierre, leaving her no dower but her beauty. She was a most innocent and kind-hearted person, and devotedly attached to her husband; and yet his bitterest enemy could hardly have contrived to say more provoking things to and of him than she did in her fondness. I will give one instance; I might give fifty.

L'Abbé de Lille, the celebrated French poet, and M. de Calonne, the no less noted ex-minister, had promised one Saturday to join the party in Brunswick-square. They came; and our chevalier, who had a tolerable opinion of his own powers as a verse-maker, could not miss so fair an opportunity of display. Accordingly, about half an hour before supper, he put on a look of *distraction*, strode hastily two or three times up and down the room, slapped his forehead, and muttered a line or two to himself; then calling hastily for pen and paper, began writing with the illegible rapidity of one who fears to lose a happy thought, a life-and-death kind of speed; then stopped a moment, as pausing for a word, then went on again fast, fast; then read the lines or seemed to read; then made a slight alteration;—in short, he acted incomparably the whole agony of composition, and finally with becoming diffidence presented the impromptu to our worthy host, who immediately imparted it to the company. It was heard with the lively approbation with which verses of compliment, read aloud in presence of the author and of the parties complimented, are sure to be received; and really, as far as I remember, the lines were very neatly turned. At last the commerce of flattery ceased. Bows, speeches, blushes, and apologies, were over; the author's excuses, the ex-minister's and the great poet's thanks, and the applause of the audience, died away; all that could be said about the impromptu was exhausted, the topic was fairly worn out, and a pause ensued, which was broken by madame des I. who had witnessed the whole scene with intense pleasure, and now exclaimed, with tears standing in her beautiful eyes, "How glad I am they like the impromptu! My poor dear chevalier! No tongue can tell what pains it has cost him! There he was all yesterday evening, writing, writing,—all the night long—never went to bed,—all to-day—only finished just before we came,—My poor dear chevalier! I should have been so sorry if they had not liked his impromptu! Now he'll be satisfied." Be it recorded to the honour of French politeness, that, finding it impossible to stop, or to out-talk her (both which experiments were tried), the whole party pretended not to hear, and never once alluded to this impromptu *fait à loisir*, till the discomfited chevalier sneaked off with his pretty simpleton, smiling and lovely as ever, and wholly unconscious of offence. Then, to be sure, they did laugh.

I have committed a great breach of etiquette in mentioning the chevalier and his lady before the Baron de G. and his daughter Angelique.

I question if the baron would forgive me; for he was of Alsace, and, though he called himself French, had German blood and quarterings, and pride enough for a prince of the empire. He was a fine-looking man of fifty, tall, upright, and active, and still giving tokens of having been in his youth one of the handsomest figures and best dancers at Versailles. He was the least gay of the party, perhaps the least happy; for his pride kept him in a state of prickly defiance against all mankind. He had the miserable jealousy of poverty, of one "fallen from his high estate," suspected insults where they were never dreamed of, and sifted civility, to see whether an affront, a lurking snake, might be concealed beneath the roses. The smallest and most authorized present, even fruit and game, were peremptorily rejected; and, if he accepted the Saturday-evening's invitation, it was evidently because he could not find in his heart to refuse a pleasure to his daughter. Angelique was, indeed, a charming creature, fair, blooming, modest and gentle, far more English than French in person, manner, and dress, doting on her father, soothing his little infirmities of temper, and ministering in every way to his comfort and happiness. Never did a father and a daughter love each other better; and that is saying much. He repaid her care and affection with the most unbounded fondness, and a liberality that had no limit but his power. Mademoiselle de G. was the best dressed, best lodged, and best-attended of any lady of the circle. The only wonder was how the baron could afford it. Every one else had some visible resource, of which they were so little ashamed that it was as freely communicated as any news of the day. We all knew that the ambassadress and her brother the marquis lived together on a small pension allotted to the lady by a foreign court, in reward of certain imputed services rendered to the Bourbons by her husband; that the count taught French, Latin, and Italian; that the abbé contrived in some way or other to make his projects keep him; and that the pretty wife of the chevalier, more learned in bonnets than in impromptus, kept a very tasty and well-accustomed milliner's shop somewhere in the region of Cranbourne-alley: but the baron's means of support continued as much a puzzle as the ambassador's destination. At last, chance let me into the secret. Our English dancing-master waxed old and rich, and retired from the profession; and our worthy governess vaunted loudly of the French gentleman whom she had engaged as his successor, and of the reform that would be worked in the heads and heels of her pupils, grown heavy and lumpish under the late instructor. The new master arrived; and, whilst a boy who accompanied him was tuning his kit, and he himself paying his respects to the governess, I had no difficulty in discovering under a common French name, my acquaintance the baron. The recognition was mutual. I shall never forget the start he gave when in the middle of the first cotillon, he espied the little girl whom he had been used to see at the corner of the supper-table in Brunswick-square, every Saturday evening. He coloured with shame and anger, his hand trembled, and his voice faltered; but as he would not know me, I had the discretion not to appear to know him, and said nothing of the affair till I again visited my kind cousin. I never saw any one more affected than she was on hearing my story. That this cold, proud, haughty man, to whom any thing that savoured of humiliation seemed terrible, should so far abase his nobility for Angelique and independence, was wonderful! She could not refrain from telling her husband, but the secret was carefully guarded from every one besides; and, except that they showed him an involuntary increase of respect, and that I could not help drawing myself up and sitting rather more upright than ordinary when he happened to look at me, nothing indicated any suspicion of the circumstance.

In the mean time the fair Angelique, who was treated with the customary disregard shown to unmarried beauties by her countrymen, (whose devoirs the old duchess, the crooked ambassadress, and the squinting countess, entirely engrossed,) was gradually making an English conquest of no small importance. The eldest son of a rich merchant, who had been connected with our host in several successful speculations, and was exceedingly intimate with the family, begged to be admitted to the Saturday evening coterie. His request was readily granted; he came at first from curiosity, but that feeling was soon exchanged for a deeper and more tender passion; and at last he ventured to disclose his love, first to the lady of his heart, and then to their mutual friend. Neither frowned on the intelligence, although both apprehended some difficulties. How would the baron look on a man who could hardly trace his ancestors farther back than his grandfather? And how again would these rich citizens, equally proud in a different way, relish an alliance with a man who, however highly descended, was neither more or less than a dancing-master? But pride melts before love, like frost in the sunshine. All parties were good and kind, all obstacles were overcome, and all faults forgotten. The rich merchant forgave the baron's poverty, and the baron (which was more difficult) forgave his wealth. The calling which had only been followed for Angelique's sake, was for her sake abandoned; the fond father consented to reside with her; and surrounded by her lovely family, freed from poverty and its distressing consciousness, and from all the evils of false shame, he has long been one of the happiest, as he was always one of the best, of French emigrants.

THE INQUISITIVE GENTLEMAN.

One of the most remarkable instances that I know of that generally false theory "the ruling passion," is my worthy friend Samuel Lynx, Esq., of Lynx Hall in this county—commonly called the Inquisitive Gentleman. Never was cognomen better bestowed. Curiosity is, indeed, the master-principle of his mind, the life-blood of his existence, the main-spring of every movement.

Mr. Lynx is an old bachelor of large fortune and ancient family;—the Lynxes of Lynx Hall, have amused themselves with overlooking their neighbours' doings for many generations. He is tall, but loses something of his height by a constant habit of stooping; he carries his head projecting before his body,—like one who has just proposed a question and is bending forward to receive an answer. A lady being asked, in his presence, what his features indicated, replied with equal truth and politeness—a most inquiring mind. The cock-up of the nose, which seems from the expansion and movement of the nostrils to be snuffing up intelligence, as a hound does the air of a dewy morning, when the scent lies well; the draw-down of the half-open mouth gaping for news; the erected chin; the wrinkled forehead; the little eager sparkling eyes, half shut, yet full of curious meanings; the strong red eye-brows, protruded like a cat's whiskers or a snail's horns, *feelers*, which actually seem sentient; every line and lineament of that remarkable physiognomy betrays a craving for information. He is exceedingly short-sighted; and that defect also, although, on the first blush of the business, it might seem a disadvantage, conduces materially to the great purpose of his existence—the knowledge of other people's affairs. Sheltered by that infirmity, our "curious impertinent" can stare at things and persons through his glasses in a manner which even he would scarcely venture with bare eyes. He can peep and pry and feel and handle, with an effrontery never equalled by an unspectacled man. He can ask the name and parentage of every body in company, toss over every book, examine every note and card, pull the flowers from the vases, take the pictures from the walls, the embroidery from your work-box, and the shawl off your back; and all with the most provoking composure, and just as if he was doing the right thing.

The propensity seems to have been born with him. He pants after secrets, just as magpies thieve, and monkeys break china, by instinct. His nurse reports of him that he came peeping into the world; that his very cries were interrogative, and his experiments in physics so many and so dangerous, that before he was four years old, she was fain to tie his hands behind him, and to lock him into a dark closet to keep him out of harm's way, chiefly moved thereto by his ripping open his own bed, to see what it was made of, and throwing her best gown into the fire, to try if silk would burn. Then he was sent to school, a *preparatory* school, and very soon sent home again for incorrigible mischief. Then a private tutor undertook to instruct him on the interrogative system, which in his case was obliged to be reversed, he asking the questions, and the tutor delivering the responses—a new cast of the didactic drama. Then he went to college; then sallied forth to ask his way over Europe; then came back to fix on his paternal estate of Lynx Hall, where, except occasional short absences, he hath sojourned ever since, signalizing himself at every stage of existence, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to age, by the most lively and persevering curiosity, and by no other quality under heaven.

If he had not been so entirely devoid of ambition, I think he might have attained to eminence in some smaller science, and have gained and received a name from a new moss, or an undiscovered butterfly. His keenness and sagacity would also have told well in antiquarian researches, particularly in any of the standing riddles of history, the Gowrie conspiracy, for instance, or the guilt of queen Mary, respecting which men may inquire and puzzle themselves from the first of January to the last of December without coming at all nearer to the solution. But he has no great pleasure in literature of any sort. Even the real parentage of the Waverley novels, although nothing in the shape of a question comes amiss to him, did not interest him quite so much as might be expected; perhaps because it was so generally interesting. He prefers the "Bye-ways to the High-ways" of literature. The secrets of which every one talks, are hardly, in his mind, "Secrets worth knowing."

Besides, mere quiet guessing is not active enough for his stirring and searching faculty. He delights in the difficult, the inaccessible, the hidden, the obscure. A forbidden place is his paradise; a board announcing "steel-traps and spring guns" will draw him over a wall twelve feet high; he would undoubtedly have entered Blue-beard's closet, although certain to share the fate of his wives; and has had serious thoughts of visiting Constantinople, just to indulge his taste by stealing a glimpse of the secluded beauties of the seraglio—an adventure which would probably have had no very fortunate termination. Indeed our modern peeping Tom has encountered several mishaps at home in the course of his long search after knowledge; and has generally had the very great aggravation of being altogether unpitied. Once, as he was taking a morning ride, in trying to look over a wall

a little higher than his head, he raised himself in the saddle, and the sagacious quadruped, his grey pony, an animal of a most accommodating and congenial spirit, having been, for that day, discarded in favour of a younger, gayer, less inquisitive and less patient steed, the new beast sprang on and left him sprawling. Once, when in imitation of Ranger, he had perched himself on the topmost round of a ladder, which he found placed beneath a window in Upper Berkeley-street, he lost his balance, and was pitched suddenly in through the sash, to the unspeakable consternation of a house-maid, who was rubbing the panes within side. Once he was tossed into an open carriage, full of ladies, as he stood up to look at them from the box of a stage-coach. And once he got a grievous knock from a chimney-sweeper, as he poked his head into the chimney to watch his operations. He has been blown up by a rocket; carried away in the strings of a balloon; all but drowned in a diving-bell: lost a finger in a mashing-mill; and broken a great toe by drawing a lead pin-cushion off a work-table. N. B. this last-mentioned exploit spoilt my worthy old friend, Miss Sewaway, a beautiful piece of fine netting, "worth," as she emphatically remarked, "a thousand toes."

These are only a few of the bodily mischiefs that have befallen poor Mr. Lynx. The moral scrapes, into which his unlucky propensity has brought him, are past all count. In his youth, although so little amorous, that I have reason to think, the formidable interrogatory which is emphatically called "popping the question," is actually the only question which he has never popped;—in his youth, he was very nearly drawn into wedlock by the sedulous attention which he paid to a young lady, whom he suspected of carrying on a clandestine correspondence. The mother scolded; the father stormed; the brother talked of satisfaction; and poor Mr. Lynx, who is as pacific as a Quaker, must certainly have been married, had not the fair nymph eloped to Gretna Green, the day before that appointed for the nuptials. So he got off for the fright. He hath undergone at least twenty challenges for different sorts of impertinences; hath had his ears boxed and his nose pulled; hath been knocked down and horsewhipped; all which casualties he bears with an exemplary patience. He hath been mistaken for a thief, a bailiff, and a spy, abroad and at home; and once, on the Sussex coast, was so inquisitive respecting the moon, and the tide, and the free trade, that he was taken at one and the same time, by the different parties, for a smuggler and a revenue officer, and narrowly escaped being shot in the one capacity, and hanged in the other.

The evils which he inflicts bear a tolerably fair proportion to those which he endures. He is, simply, the most disagreeable man that lives. There is a curious infelicity about him, which carries him straight to the wrong point. If there be such a thing as a sore subject, he is sure to press on it, to question a parvenu on his pedigree, a condemned author on his tragedy, an old maid on her age. Besides these iniquities, his want of sympathy is so open and undisguised, that the most loquacious egotist loses the pleasure of talking of himself, in the evident absence of all feeling or interest on the part of the hearer. His conversation is always more like a judicial examination than any species of social intercourse, and often like the worst sort of examination—cross-questioning. He demands, like a secretary to the inquisition, and you answer (for you must answer) like a prisoner on the rack. Then the man is so mischievous! he rattles old china, marches over flower-beds, and paws Irling's lace. The people at museums and exhibitions dread the sight of him. He cannot keep his hands from moths and humming-birds; and once poked up a rattlesnake to discover whether the joints of the tail did actually produce the sound from which it derives its name; by which attack that pugnacious reptile was excited to such wrath that two ladies fell into hysterics. He nearly demolished the Invisible Girl by too rough an inquiry into her existence; and got turned out of the automaton chess-player's territories, in consequence of an assault which he committed on that ingenious piece of mechanism. To do Mr. Lynx justice, I must admit that he sometimes does a little good to all this harm. He has, by design or accident, in the ordinary exercise of his vocation, hindered two or three duels, prevented a good deal of poaching and pilfering, and even saved his own house, and the houses of his neighbours from divers burglaries; his vigilance being, at least, as useful, in that way, as a watchman or an alarm-bell.

He makes but small use of his intelligence, however come by, which is, perhaps, occasioned by a distinctive difference of sex. A woman only half as curious would be prodigal of information—a spendthrift of news. Mr. Lynx hoards his, like a miser. Possession is his idol. If I knew any thing which I particularly wished the world not to know, I should certainly tell it to him at once. A secret with him, is as safe as money in the bank; the only peril lies in the ardour of his pursuit. One reason for his great discretion seems to me to be his total incapacity of speech—in any other than the interrogative mood. His very tone is set to that key. I doubt if he can drop his voice at the end of a sentence, or knows the meaning of a full stop. Who? What? When? Where? How? are his catchwords; and Eh? his only interjection. Children and poor people, and all awkward persons who like to be talked to, and to talk again,—but do not very well understand how to set about it, delight in Mr. Lynx's notice.

His catechetical mode of conversation enchants them, especially as he is of a liberal turn, and has generally some loose silver in his pocket to bestow on a good answerer. To be sure the rapidity of his questions sometimes a little incommodes our country dames, who when fairly set into a narrative of grievances do not care to be interrupted; but the honour of telling their histories and the histories of all their neighbours to a gentleman, makes ample amends for this little alloy.—They are the only class who can endure his society, and he returns the compliment by showing a very decided preference for theirs. The obscure has a remarkable charm for him. To enjoy it in perfection, he will often repair to some great manufacturing town where he is wholly unknown, and deposit himself in some suburban lodging, in a new-built row, with poplars before the door, when, inviting his landlady to make tea for him, he gains, by aid of that genial beverage, an insight into all the loves and hatreds, "kitchen cabals and nursery mishaps,"—in a word, all the scandal of the town. Then he is happy.

Travelling is much to his taste; as are also Stage Coaches, and Steam Packets, and Diligences, and generally all places where people meet and talk, especially an inn, which is capital questioning ground, and safer than most other. There is a license, a liberty, a freedom in the very name, and besides people do not stay long enough to be affronted. He spends a good deal of his time in these privileged abodes, and is well known as the Inquisitive Gentleman, on most of the great roads, although his seat of Lynx Hall is undoubtedly his principal residence. It is most commodiously situated, on a fine eminence overlooking three counties; and he spends most of his time in a sort of observatory, which he has built on a rising ground, at the edge of the park, where he has mounted a telescope, by means of which he not only commands all the lanes and bye-paths in the neighbourhood, but is enabled to keep a good look out, on the great northern road, two miles off, to oversee the stage-coaches, and keep an eye on the mail. The manor lies in two parishes—another stroke of good fortune!—since the gossiping of both villages seems to belong to him of territorial right. Vestries, work-houses, schools, all are legitimately ground of inquiry. Besides his long and intimate acquaintance with the neighbourhood is an inestimable advantage, to a man of his turn of mind, and supplies, by detail and minuteness, what might be wanted in variety and novelty. He knows every man, woman and child, horse, cow, pig and dog, within half a dozen miles, and has a royal faculty of not forgetting, so that he has always plenty of matter for questions, and most of the people being his tenants, answers come quickly. He used——

As I live, here he is! just alighting from the grey poney, asking old Dame Wheeler what makes her lame on one side, and little Jemmy White, why his jacket is ragged on the other—bawling to both—Dame Wheeler is deaf, and Jemmy stupid: and she is answering at cross purposes, and he staring with his mouth open, and not answering at all, and Mr. Lynx is pouring question on question as fast as rain-drops in a thunder-shower—Well I must put away my desk, and my papers, especially *this*, for I should not quite like to have the first benefit of the true and faithful likeness, which I have been sketching; I must put it away; folding and sealing will hardly do, for though I don't think—I can scarcely imagine, that he would actually break open a sealed packet,—yet man is frail; I have a regard for my old friend, and will not put him in the way of temptation.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE OLD HOUSE AT ABERLEIGH.

June 25th.—What a glowing, glorious day! Summer in its richest prime, noon in its most sparkling brightness, little white clouds dappling the deep blue sky, and the sun, now partially veiled, and now bursting through them with an intensity of light! It would not do to walk to-day, professedly to walk,—we should be frightened at the very sound; and yet it is probable that we may be beguiled into a pretty long stroll before we return home. We are going to drive to the old house at Aberleigh, to spend the morning under the shade of those balmy firs, and amongst those luxuriant rose-trees, and by the side of that brimming Loddon river. "Do not expect us before six o'clock," said I, as I left the house; "Six at soonest!" added my charming companion; and off we drove in our little pony chaise drawn by our old mare, and with the good-humoured urchin, Henry's successor, a sort of younger Scrub, who takes care of horse and chaise, and cow and garden, for our charioteer.

My comrade in this homely equipage was a young lady of high family and higher endowments, to whom the novelty of the thing, and her own naturalness of character and simplicity of taste gave an unspeakable enjoyment. She danced the little chaise up and down as she got into it, and laughed for very glee like a child. Lizzy herself could not have been more delighted. She praised the horse and the driver, and the roads and the scenery, and gave herself fully up to the enchantment of a rural excursion in the sweetest weather of this sweet season. I enjoyed all this too; for the road was pleasant to every sense,

winding through narrow lanes, under high elms, and between hedges garlanded with woodbine and rose-trees, whilst the air was scented with the delicious fragrance of blossomed beans, I enjoyed it all,—but I believe my principal pleasure was derived from my companion herself.

Emily L. is a person whom it is a privilege to know. She is quite like a creation of the older poets, and might pass for one of Shakspeare's or Fletcher's women just stepped into life; quite as tender, as playful, as gentle, and as kind. She is clever too, and has all the knowledge and accomplishments that a carefully-conducted education, acting on a mind of singular clearness and ductility, matured and improved by the very best company, can bestow. But one never thinks of her acquirements. It is the charming artless character, the bewitching sweetness of manner, the real and universal sympathy, the quick taste and the ardent feeling, that one loves in Emily. She is Irish by birth, and has in perfection the melting voice and soft caressing accent by which her fair countrywomen are distinguished. Moreover she is pretty — I think her beautiful, and so do all who have heard as well as seen her, — but pretty, very pretty, all the world must confess; and, perhaps, that is a distinction more enviable, because less envied, than the "palmy state" of beauty. Her prettiness is of the prettiest kind—that of which the chief character is youthfulness. A short but pleasing figure, all grace and symmetry, a fair blooming face, beaming with intelligence and good-humour; the prettiest little feet, and the whitest hands in the world;—such is Emily L.

She resides with her maternal grandmother, a venerable old lady, slightly shaken with the palsy; and when together, (and they are so fondly attached to each other that they are seldom parted) it is one of the loveliest combinations of youth and age ever witnessed.—There is no seeing them without feeling an increase of respect and affection for both grandmother and granddaughter—always one of the tenderest and most beautiful of natural connections—as Richardson knew when he made such exquisite use of it in his matchless book. I fancy that grandmamma Shirley must have been just such another venerable lady as Mrs. S.,and our sweet Emily—Oh, no! Harriet Byron is not half good enough for her!—There is nothing like her in the whole seven volumes!

But here we are at the bridge! Here we must alight! "This is the Loddon, Emily. Is it not a beautiful river? rising level with its banks, so clear, and smooth, and peaceful, giving back the verdant landscape and the bright blue sky, and bearing on its pellucid stream the snowy water-lily, the purest of flowers, which sits enthroned on its own cool leaves looking chastity itself, like the lady in Comus. That queenly flower becomes the water, and so do the stately swans which are sailing so majestically down the stream, like those who

> "On St. Mary's lake
> Float double, swan and shadow."

We must dismount here, and leave Richard to take care of our equipage under the shade of these trees, whilst we walk up to the house:—See, there it is! We must cross this stile; there is no other way now."

And crossing the stile we were immediately in what had been a drive round a spacious park, and still retained something of the character, though the park itself had long been broken into arable fields,—and in full view of the Great House, a beautiful structure of James the First's time, whose glassless windows and dilapidated doors, form a melancholy contrast with the strength and entireness of the rich and massive front.

The story of that ruin—for such it is—is always to me singularly affecting:—It is that of the decay of an ancient and distinguished family, gradually reduced from the highest wealth and station to actual poverty. The house and park, and a small estate around it, were entailed on a distant cousin, and could not be alienated; and the late owner, the last of his name and lineage, after struggling with debt and difficulty, farming his own lands, and clinging to his magnificent home with a love of place almost as tenacious as that of the younger Foscari, was at last forced to abandon it, retired to a paltry lodging in a paltry town, and died there, about twenty years ago, broken-hearted.

His successor, bound by no ties of association to the spot, and rightly judging the residence to be much too large for the diminished estate, immediately sold the superb fixtures, and would have entirely taken down the house, if, on making the attempt, the masonry had not been found so solid that the materials were not worth the labour. A great part, however, of one side is laid open, and the splendid chambers with their carving and gilding, are exposed to the wind and rain—sad memorials of past grandeur. The grounds have been left in a merciful neglect; the park, indeed, is broken up, the lawn mown twice a year like a common hay-field, the grotto mouldering into ruin, and the fish-ponds choked with rushes and aquatic plants; but the shrubs and flowering trees are undestroyed, and have grown into a magnificence of size and wildness of beauty, such as we may imagine them to attain in their native forests. Nothing can exceed their luxuriance, especially in the spring, when the lilac and laburnum and double cherry put forth their gorgeous blossoms.—There is a sweet sadness in the sight of such floweriness amidst such desolation; it seems the triumph of nature over the destructive

power of man. The whole place, in that season more particularly, is full of a soft and soothing melancholy, reminding me, I scarcely know why, of some of the descriptions of natural scenery in the novels of Charlotte Smith, which I read when a girl, and which, perhaps for that reason, hang on my memory.

But here we are, in the smooth grassy ride, on the top of a steep turfy slope descending to the river, crowned with enormous firs and limes of equal growth, looking across the winding waters into a sweet peaceful landscape of quiet meadows, shut in by distant woods. What a fragrance is in the air from the balmy fir-trees and the blossomed limes! What an intensity of odour! And what a murmur of bees in the lime-trees! What a coil those little winged creatures make over our heads! And what a pleasant sound it is! —the pleasantest of busy sounds, that which comes associated with all that is good and beautiful—industry and forecast, and sunshine and flowers. Surely these lime-trees might store a hundred hives; the very odour is of a honied richness, cloying, satiating.

Emily exclaimed in admiration as we stood under the deep, strong, leafy shadow, and still more when honey-suckles trailed their untrimmed profusion in our path, and roses, really trees, almost intercepted our passage.

"O, Emily! farther yet! Force your way by that jessamine—it will yield; I will take care of this stubborn white rose-bough."—"Take care of yourself!—Pray take care," said my fairest friend; "let me hold back the branches."— After we had won our way through the strait, at some expense of veils and flounces, she stopt to contemplate and admire the tall graceful shrub, whose long thorny stems spreading in every direction had opposed our progress, and now waved their delicate clusters over our heads. "Did I ever think," exclaimed she, "of standing under the shadow of a white rose-tree! What an exquisite fragrance! And what a beautiful flower!—so pale, and white, and tender, and the petals thin and smooth as silk! What rose is it?" "Don't you know? Did you never see it before? It is rare now, I believe, and seems rarer than it is, because it only blossoms in very hot summers; but this, Emily, is the musk-rose,—that very musk-rose of which Titania talks, and which is worthy of Shakspeare and of her. Is it not?—No! do not smell to it; it is less sweet so than other roses; but one cluster in a vase, or even that bunch in your bosom will perfume a large room, as it does this summer air." "Oh! we will take twenty clusters," said Emily. "I wish grandmamma were here! She talks so often of a musk-rose-tree that grew against one end of her father's house. I wish she were here to see this!"

Echoing her wish, and well laden with musk-roses, planted, perhaps, in the days of Shakspeare, we reached the steps that led to a square summer-house, or banqueting-room, overhanging the river; the under part was a boat-house, whose projecting roof, as well as the walls, and the very top of the little tower, was covered with ivy and woodbine, and surmounted by tufted barberries, bird cherries, acacias, covered with their snowy chains, and other pendent and flowering trees. Beyond rose two poplars of unrivalled magnitude, towering like stately columns over the dark tall firs, and giving a sort of pillared and architectural grandeur to the scene.

We were now close to the mansion; but it looked sad and desolate, and the entrance, choked with brambles and nettles, seemed almost to repel our steps. The summer-house, the beautiful summer-house, was free and open and inviting, commanding from the unglazed windows, which hung high above the water, a reach of the river terminated by a rustic mill.

There we sate, emptying our little basket of fruit and country cates, till Emily was seized with a desire of viewing, from the other side of the Loddon, the scenery which had so much enchanted her. "I must," said she, "take a sketch of the ivied boat-house, and of this sweet room, and this pleasant window;—grandmamma would never be able to walk from the road to see the place itself, but she must see its likeness." So forth we sallied, not forgetting the dear musk-roses.

We had no way of reaching the desired spot but by retracing our steps a mile, during the heat of the hottest hour of the day, and then following the course of the river to an equal distance on the other side; nor had we any materials for sketching, except the rumpled paper which had contained our repast, and a pencil without a point which I happened to have about me. But these small difficulties are pleasures to gay and happy youth. Regardless of such obstacles, the sweet Emily bounded on like a fawn, and I followed delighting in her delight. The sun went in, and the walk was delicious; a reviving coolness seemed to breathe over the water, wafting the balmy scent of the firs and limes; we found a point of view presenting the boat-house, the water, the poplars, and the mill, in a most felicitous combination; the little straw fruit-basket made a capital table; and refreshed and sharpened and pointed by our trusty lacquey's excellent knife (your country boy is never without a good knife, it is his prime treasure,) the pencil did double duty;—first in the skilful hands of Emily, whose faithful and spirited sketch does equal honour to the scene and to the artist, and then in the humbler office of attempting a faint transcript of my own impressions in the following sonnet:—

It was an hour of calmest noon, a day
Of ripest summer; o'er the deep blue sky
White speckled clouds came sailing peacefully,
Half-shrouding in a checker'd veil the ray

Of the sun, too ardent else,—what time we lay
By the smooth Loddon, opposite the high
Steep bank, which as a coronet gloriously
Wore its rich crest of firs and lime-trees, gay
With their pale tassels; while from out a bower
Of ivy (where those column'd poplars rear
Their heads) the ruin'd boat-house, like a tower,
Flung its deep shadow on the waters clear.
My Emily! forget not that calm hour,
Nor that fair scene, by thee made doubly dear!

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

MY GODFATHER.

It is now nearly twenty years ago, that I, a young girl just freed from the trammels of schooldom, went into a remote and distant county, on a visit to my godfather, to make acquaintance with a large colony of my relations, and behold new scenes and new faces; a pleasure, certainly; but a formidable and awful pleasure, to a shy and home-loving girl. Nothing could have reconciled me to the prospect of encountering so many strange cousins, for they were all strangers, but my strong desire to see my dear and venerable god-papa, for whom, although we had never met since the christening, I entertained the most lively affection,—an affection nourished on his part by kindnesses of every sort, from the huge wax-doll, and the letter in print-hand, proper to the damsel of six years old, down to the pretty verses and elegant necklace, his birthday greeting to the young lady of sixteen. He was no stranger, that dear god-papa! I was quite sure I should know him at first sight, quite sure that I should love him better than ever; both which predictions were verified to the letter. It would have been strange indeed if they had not.

Mr. Evelyn, for so I shall call him, was a gentleman of an ancient family and considerable fortune, residing in a small town in the north of England; where he had occupied for the last fifty years, the best house, and the highest station, the object of universal respect and affection, from high and low. He was that beautiful thing, a healthy and happy old man. Shakspeare, the master painter, has partly described him for me, in the words of old Adam,—

> "Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
> Frosty, but kindly."

Never was wintry day, with the sun smiling upon the icicles, so bright or so keen. At eighty-four, he had an unbent, vigorous person, a fresh colour, long, curling, milk-white hair, and regular features, lighted up by eyes as brilliant and as piercing as those of a hawk; his foot was as light, his voice as clear, and his speech as joyous as at twenty. He had a life of mind, an alertness of spirit, a brilliant and unfading hilarity, which were to him, like the quick blood of youth. Time had been rather his friend than his foe; had stolen nothing as far as I could discover; and had given such a license to his jokes and his humour, that he was when I knew him as privileged a person as a court jester in the days of yore. Perhaps he was always so: for, independently of fortune and station, high animal spirits, invincible good-humour, and a certain bustling officiousness, are pretty sure to make their way in the world, especially when they seek only for petty distinctions. He was always the first personage of his small circle; president of half the clubs in the neighbourhood; steward to the races; chairman of the bench; father of the corporation; and would undoubtedly have been member for the town, if that ancient borough had not had the ill luck to be disfranchised in some stormy period of our national history.

But that was no great loss to my dear godfather. Even the bench and the vestry, although he presided at them with sufficient reputation, were too grave matters to suit his taste. He would have made a bad police magistrate; his sympathies ran directly the contrary way. Accordingly he used to be accused of certain merciful abuses of his office of justice of the peace: such as winking at vagrants and vagabonds, encouraging the Merry Andrew, and the droll fellow Punch, and feeing the constable, *not* to take up a certain drunken fiddler, who had haunted the town, man and boy, these forty years.

Races and balls were more his element. There he would walk about with his hands behind him, and a pleasant word for every one; his keen eye sparkling with gaiety, and his chuckling laugh heard above all, the unwearied patron and promoter of festivity in all its branches; rather than the dance should languish, he would stand up himself. This indulgence to the young, or rather this sympathy with enjoyment wherever he found it, was not confined to the rich; he liked a fair or a revel quite as well as an assembly, perhaps better, because the merriment there was noisier, heartier, more completely free from restraint. How he would chuck the rosy country lasses under the chin, and question them about their sweethearts! And how the little coquettes would smile, and blush, and curtsy, and cry "fie," and enjoy it! That was certainly an octogenarian privilege, and one worth a score or two of years, in his estimation.

But these diversions, thoroughly as he entered into their spirit, were by no means necessary to his individual amusement. His cheerfulness needed no external stimuli. The day was too short—life itself, although so prolonged, was too brief for his busy idleness. He had nothing to do, followed no calling, belonged to no profession, had no estate to improve, no children to establish, and yet from morning to

night he was employed about some vagary or other, with as much ardour as if the fate of the nation depended on his speed. Fishing and fiddling, shooting and coursing, turning and varnishing, making bird-cages and picture-frames, and cabbage-nets, and flies for angling, constructing charades, and tagging verses, were only a few of his occupations. Then he dallied with science and flirted with art; was in a small way a connoisseur, had a tolerable collection of prints, and a very bad one of paintings, and was moreover a sort of virtuoso. I had not been two days in the house before my good godfather introduced me to his museum, a long room or rather gallery, where as he boasted, and I well believe, neither mop, nor broom, nor housemaid had ever entered.

This museum was certainly the dirtiest den into which I ever set foot; dark, to a pitch, which took away for a while all power of distinguishing objects, and so dusty as to annihilate colour, and confuse form. I have a slight notion that this indistinctness was, in the present instance, rather favourable than otherwise to the collection, which I cannot help suspecting, was a thought less valuable than its owner opined. It consisted, I believe (for one cannot be very sure,) of sundry birds in glass cases exceedingly ragged and dingy; of sundry stuffed beasts, among which the moth had made great havoc; of sundry reptiles, and other curiosities, preserved, pickled —(what is the proper word?)—in glass bottles; of a great heap of ores, and shells, and spars, covered with cobwebs; of some copper coins, all rust; of half a mummy; and a bit of cloth made of asbestos. The only time I ever got into a scrape with my good-humoured host was on the score of this last-mentioned treasure. Being assured by him that it was the veritable, undoubted asbestos, which not only resists the action of fire, but is actually cleansed by that element, I proposed, seeing how very much it needed purification, that it should undergo a fiery ablution forthwith; but that ordeal was rejected as too dangerous; and I myself certainly considered for five minutes as dangerous too—something of an incendiary, a female Guy Vaux—I was lucky enough to do away the impression by admiring, very honestly, some newly-caught butterflies,—pretty insects, and not yet spoiled,—which occupied one side of a long table. They were backed to my great consternation by a row of skulls, which, Mr. Evelyn having lately met with Dr. Gall's book, and being much smitten with Cranio—I beg its new name's pardon—Phrenology—had purchased at five shillings a head of the sexton, and now descanted on in a vein as unlike Hamlet's as possible.

The museum was hung round with festoons of bird's eggs, strung necklace-fashion, as boys are wont to thread them, being the part of its contents, which, next perhaps to his new playthings the skulls, its owner valued most. Indeed they had an additional charm in his eyes, by being mostly the trophies of his own exploits from childhood downwards. Bird-nesting, always his favourite sport, had been, since he had dabbled in natural history, invested with the dignity of a pursuit. He loved it as well as any child in the parish; had as keen an eye to his game, and as much intrepidity in its acquisition; climbed trees, delved into hedge-rows, and no more minded a rent garment, or a tumble into a ditch, than an urchin of eight years old. The butterflies too, were, for the most part, of his own catching. I have myself seen a chase after a moth, that might serve as a companion to that grand Peter-Pindaric, "Sir Joseph Banks and the emperor of Morocco;" but my godfather had the better of the sport—he knocked down *his* insect.

To return to our museum. The last article that I remember, was a prodigious bundle of autographs, particularly unselect; where Thomas Smith, date unknown, figured by the side of Oliver Cromwell; and John Brown, equally incognito, had the honour of being tied up with Queen Elizabeth. I would not be very certain either that there might not be an occasional forgery among the greater names; not on the part of the possessor, he would as soon have thought of forging a bank bill, but on that of the several venders, or donors, which last class generally came, autograph in hand, to beg a favour. Never was any human being so complete a subject for imposition—so entirely devoid of guile himself, so utterly unsuspicious of its existence in others. He lived as if there were not a lie in the world;—blessed result of a frank and ardent temperament, and of a memory so happily constituted that it retained no more trace of past evil, than of last year's clouds.

His living collection was quite as large, and almost as out of the way, as his dead one. He was an eminent bird-fancier, and had all sorts of "smale foules," as old Chaucer calls them, in every variety of combination, and in different stages of education; for your professed bird-fancier, like your professed florist, is seldom content to let nature alone. Starlings, jays, and magpies, learning to talk; bulfinches and goldfinches learning tunes from a barrel organ; linnets brought up under a wood-lark, unlearning their own notes and studying his; nightingales, some of the earliest known in those parts, learning to live north of Trent; all sorts of canaries, and mule birds, and nests full of young things not yet distinguishable from each other, made up the miscellaneous contents of his aviary. He had also some white mice, a tame squirrel, and a very sagacious hedge-dog; and he had had a tortoise, which by an extraordinary exertion of ingenuity, he had contrived to kill, —a feat, which a road wagon going over the poor animal would have failed to perform.

This was the manner. The tortoise, as most people know, is for about six months in the year torpid, and generally retires under ground to enjoy his half year's nap: he had been missing some days, when the old gardener dug him up out of a cabbage-bed, and brought him in for dead. My godfather, forgetting his protegé's habits, and just fresh from reading some book on the efficacy of the warm bath, (he was a great man for specifics,) soused the unlucky land-crab into hot water, and killed him outright. All that could be done to repair the mischief was tried, and he was finally replaced in his old burrow, the cabbage-bed, but even burying him failed to bring him to life again. This misadventure rather damped Mr. Evelyn's zest for outlandish favourites. After all, his real and abiding pets were children — children of all ages, from six months old to twelve years. He had much of the child in his own composition; his sweet and simple nature, his restlessness and merriment, harmonized with theirs most completely. He loved a game at romps too, as well as they did, and would join in all their sports from battledore and shuttlecock, to puss in the corner. He had no child of his own—(have I not said that he was married?)—no child whom he had an absolute right to spoil; but he made all the children of the place serve his turn, and right happy were they to be spoiled by Mr. Evelyn.

They all flocked around him, guided by that remarkable instinct, by which the veriest baby can detect a person who really loves it; ran after him when he rode on horseback, thrust their little hands into his when he walked, and hung round the stone porch in which he had the habit of sitting on a summer afternoon, reading the newspaper in the sun, and chatting to the passers by, (for he knew every soul in the place, gentle or simple) holding a long dialogue with one, sending a jest after another, and a kind nod to the third. Thither his clients, the children, would resort every evening, as much, I verily believe, for the love of their patron as for the gingerbread, apples, and halfpence, — the tops, marbles, and balls, which used to issue from those capacious magazines, his pockets.

The house, to which this porch belonged, was well suited to the tastes and station of its owner;—stately, old-fashioned, and spacious; situate in the principal street, and commanding the market-place,—a mansion in a town. Behind was a formal garden in the Dutch style,—terraces, and beds of flowers, and tall yew hedges, and holly and box cut into various puzzling shapes, dragons, peacocks, lions, and swans. Within doors all was equally precise and out of date, being (except the museum) under the special and exclusive dominion of the lady of the house.

Mrs. Evelyn formed just the contrast with her husband which is said to tell best in matrimony. She was nearly twenty years younger in actual age, but seemed twenty years older from the mere absence of his vivacity. In all essential points they agreed perfectly; were equally charitable, generous, hospitable, and just; but of their minor differences there was no end. She was grave, and slow, and formal — upright, thin, and pale; dressed with a sort of sober splendour; wore a great quantity of old-fashioned jewellery; went airing every day; and got up, breakfasted, dined, supped, and went to bed at exactly the same minute, the whole year round,—clock-work was never more regular. Then she was addicted to a fussing and fidgety neatness, such as is held proper to old maids and Dutch women, and kept the house afloat with perpetual scourings. Moreover she had a hatred of motion and idleness, and pursued as a duty some long tiresome useless piece of handy-work. Knitting a carpet, for instance, or netting a veil, or constructing that hideous piece of female joinery, a patch-work counterpane. The room in which I slept bore notable testimony to her industry; the whole fringe of the bed and window-curtains being composed of her knotting, and the hearth-rug of her work, as well as a chair, miscalled easy, stuffed into a hardness bumping against you in every direction, and covered with huge flowers, in small tent stitch, flowers that would have done honour to the gardens of Brobdignag. Besides this she was a genealogist, and used to bewilder herself and her hearers in a labyrinth of pedigree, which even at this distance of time, it gives me a head-ache to think of; nay, she was so unmerciful as to expect that I should understand and recollect all the intricacies of my own descent, and how I came to be of kin to the innumerable cousins to whom she introduced me, — I could as soon have learnt that despair of my childhood, the multiplication table.

All this might seem to compose no very desirable companion for an idle girl of sixteen; but I had not been a week in the house before I loved her very nearly as well as my dear godfather, although in a different way. Her thorough goodness made itself felt, and she was so perfectly a gentlewoman, so constantly considerate and kind, so liberal and charitable, in deed and word, that nobody could help loving Mrs. Evelyn. Besides, we had one taste in common, a fondness for her peculiar territory, the orchard, a large grassy spot covered with fine old fruit trees, divided from the flower garden on the north by a magnificent yew hedge, bounded on one side by a filbert walk, on the other by the high ivied stone wall of the potagerie, and sloping down on the south to a broad sparkling rivulet, which went dancing along like a thing of life, (as your northern rivulet is apt to do) forming a thousand tiny bays and promonto-

ries, and letting in a prospect of matchless beauty. Fancy a winding woodland valley, a rural bridge, a village, with its gothic church, and a steep acclivity crowned with the ruins of a venerable castle, thrown together with a felicity of form and colouring, which might beseem a landscape-painter's dream, and you will have a faint idea of the view from that orchard. Under the yew hedge, on a sunny bank thickly set with roses and honeysuckles, and flowers and sweet herbs, were Mrs. Evelyn's pets, her only pets, the bees. She was so fond of them, and visited them so often, that I used to wonder that she allowed them to be taken; but her love of bees was balanced by her extraordinary predilection for honey; honey, especially when eaten in the comb, was, in her mind, a specific for all diseases, an universal panacea, the true elixir vitæ. She imputed her own good health entirely to this salutary regimen; and was sure to trace every illness she heard of, to some neglect of honey-eating. That she never could prevail on her husband to taste this natural balsam (as she was wont to call it) must have been the great evil of her matrimonial life. Every morning did she predict death or disease to the sturdy recusant; and every morning was she answered by the same keen glance of the laughing hazel eye, and the same arch nod of defiance. There he sat, a living witness that man might thrive without honey. It was really too provoking.

Another point in dispute between them arose out of Mr. Evelyn's extraordinary addiction to match-making. He always insisted on calling marriage a happy ceremony, although one should think he had attended weddings enough to know that a funeral is generally lively in the comparison; and I am persuaded that dear as he held his genuine asbestos, a piece of bride-cake, drawn nine times through the ring, would for the time being have been held the greater treasure. Accordingly, he was the general confidant of all courtships of gentility within ten miles, and even, with all deference be it spoken, of some wooings, which had no gentility to boast; for his taste being known, and his abilities in that line duly appreciated, half the youths in the town came bowing to his honour to beg his good word. To his honour's good word and his own goodly person, did John Bell, head-waiter of the Greyhound, owe the felicity of calling the buxom widow Wilson, the rich landlady of that well-accustomed Inn, Mrs. Bell. To his honour's good word and a threatened loss of custom, was Robert Heron, the smart young linen-draper, indebted for the fair hand of Margaret Car, sole heiress of Archy Car, Scotchman, and barber, between whom and old Robert Heron a Capulet and Montagu feud, originating in a quarrel about their respective countries, had subsisted for a dozen years. Nothing short of my godfather's threatening to learn to shave, could have brought that Romeo and Juliet together. His honour related these exploits with great complacency, whilst his wife did not fail to remind him of the less fortunate exertions of his talent;—how his influence gained poor Will the blacksmith his shrew, or Jem the gardener his dawdle. But such accidents will befall the ablest diplomatists. The grand object of his schemes at present was an union between two individuals of his own household. Mrs. Evelyn's personal attendant was a stiff perpendicular old maid, bony and meagre in her person, with red hair, and something of a vinegar aspect,—for the rest a well-intentioned woman, and a valuable servant. Mr. Evelyn had been looking out for a sweetheart for this amiable damsel, (Mrs. Embleton by name) for the last ten years, and had begun to despair of success, when all at once it occurred to him to strike up a match between her and his fat coachman, Samuel—a round jolly old bachelor, blunt and bluff, with a broad red face, a knowing grin, and a most magnificent coachmanlike wig. He began in due form by rallying Mrs. Embleton on her conquest. Mrs. Embleton minced and simpered—no objection in that quarter! Then he consulted Mrs. Evelyn,—Mrs. Evelyn remonstated; that, however, he knew by experience, might be overcome. Then he laughed at Samuel,—Samuel whistled;—that was rather dismaying. The next day he returned to the charge—and again Samuel whistled,—worse and worse! A third time his master attacked him, and a third did Samuel whistle. Any body but my godfather would have despaired. He, however, did not. At this point stood the game, when I left the north; and the very first letter I received from Mrs. Evelyn told me that the marriage was settled, the wedding-day fixed, and the bride-cake purchased. And the next brought tidings (for I still had my doubts of Samuel) that the ceremony was actually performed, and the happy knot tied; and Mrs. Evelyn seemed pacified, and the bridegroom resigned. No withstanding my dear godfather!

THE OLD GIPSY.

We have few gipsies in our neighbourhood. In spite of our tempting green lanes, our woody dells and heathy commons, the rogues don't take to us. I am afraid that we are too civilized, too cautious; that our sheep-folds are too closely watched; our barn-yards too well guarded; our geese and ducks too fastly penned; our chickens too securely locked up; our little pigs too safe in their sty; our game too scarce; our laundresses too careful. In short, we are too little primitive; we have a snug brood of vagabonds and poachers

of our own, to say nothing of their regular followers, constables and justices of the peace:—we have stocks in the village, and a treadmill in the next town; and therefore we go gipsy-less—a misfortune of which every landscape painter, and every lover of that living landscape, the country, can appreciate the extent. There is nothing under the sun that harmonizes so well with nature, especially in her woodland recesses, as that picturesque people, who are, so to say, the wild genus—the pheasants and roebucks of the human race.

Sometimes, indeed, we used to see a gipsy procession passing along the common, like an eastern caravan, men, women, and children, donkeys and dogs; and sometimes a patch of bare earth, strewed with ashes and surrounded with scathed turf, on the broad green margin of some cross-road, would give token of a gipsy halt; but a regular gipsy encampment has always been so rare an event, that I was equally surprised and delighted to meet with one in the course of my walks last autumn, particularly as the party was of the most innocent description, quite free from those tall, dark, lean, Spanish-looking men, who, it must be confessed, with all my predilection for the caste, are rather startling to meet with when alone in an unfrequented path; and a path more solitary than that into which the beauty of a bright October morning had tempted me, could not well be imagined.

Branching off from the high road, a little below our village, runs a wide green lane, bordered on either side by a row of young oaks and beeches just within the hedge, forming an avenue, in which, on a summer afternoon, you may see the squirrels disporting from tree to tree, whilst the rooks, their fellow denizens, are wheeling in noisy circles over their heads. The fields sink gently down on each side, so that, being the bottom of a natural winding valley, and crossed by many little rills and rivulets, the turf exhibits even in the driest summers an emerald verdure. Scarcely any one passes the end of that lane, without wishing to turn into it; but the way is in some sort dangerous and difficult for foot passengers, because the brooklets which intersect it are in many instances bridgeless, and in others bestridden by planks so decayed, that it were rashness to pass them; and the nature of the ground, treacherous and boggy, and in many places as unstable as water, renders it for carriages wholly impracticable.

I however, who do not dislike a little difficulty where there is no absolute danger, and who am moreover almost as familiar with the one only safe track as the heifers who graze there, sometimes venture along this seldom-trodden path, which terminates, at the end of a mile and a half, in a spot of singular beauty. The hills become abrupt and woody, the cultivated enclosures cease, and the long narrow valley ends in a little green, bordered on one side by a fine old park, whose mossy paling, overhung with thorns and hollies, comes sweeping round it, to meet the rich coppices which clothe the opposite acclivity. Just under the high and irregular paling, shaded by the birches and sycamores of the park, and by the venerable oaks which are scattered irregularly on the green, is a dark deep pool, whose broken banks, crowned with fern and wreathed with briar and bramble, have an air of wildness and grandeur that might have suited the pencil of Salvator Rosa.

In this lonely place (for the mansion to which the park belongs has long been uninhabited) I first saw our gipsies. They had pitched their little tent under one of the oak trees, perhaps from a certain dim sense of natural beauty, which those who live with nature in the fields are seldom totally without; perhaps because the neighbourhood of the coppices, and of the deserted hall, was favourable to the acquisition of game, and of the little fuel which their hardy habits required. The party consisted only of four—an old crone, in a tattered red cloak and black bonnet, who was stooping over a kettle, of which the contents were probably as savoury as that of Meg Merrilies, renowned in story; a pretty black-eyed girl, at work under the trees; a sun-burnt urchin of eight or nine, collecting sticks and dead leaves to feed their out-of-door fire, and a slender lad two or three years older, who lay basking in the sun, with a couple of shabby dogs of the sort called mongrel, in all the joy of idleness, whilst a grave patient donkey stood grazing hard-by. It was a pretty picture, with its soft autumnal sky, its rich woodiness, its sunshine, its verdure, the light smoke curling from the fire, and the group disposed around it so harmless, poor outcasts! and so happy—a beautiful picture! I stood gazing on it till I was half ashamed to look longer, and came away half afraid that they would depart before I could see them again.

This fear I soon found to be groundless. The old gipsy was a celebrated fortune-teller, and the post having been so long vacant, she could not have brought her talents to a better market. The whole village rang with the predictions of this modern Cassandra—unlike her Trojan predecessor, inasmuch as her prophecies were never of evil. I myself could not help admiring the real cleverness, the genuine gipsy tact with which she adapted her foretellings to the age, the habits, and the known desires and circumstances of her clients.

To our little pet Lizzy, for instance, a damsel of seven, she predicted a fairing; to Ben Kirby, a youth of thirteen, head batter of the boys, a new cricket-ball; to Ben's sister Lucy, a girl some three years his senior, and just promoted to that ensign of womanhood a cap, she promised a pink topknot; whilst for Miss

Sophia Matthews, our old-maidish schoolmistress, who would be heartily glad to be a girl again, she foresaw one handsome husband, and for the smart widow Simmons, two. These were the least of her triumphs. George Davis, the dashing young farmer of the hill-house, a gay sportsman, who scoffed at fortune-tellers and matrimony, consulted her as to whose greyhound would win the courser's cup at the beacon meeting; to which she replied, that she did not know to whom the dog would belong, but that the winner of the cup would be a white greyhound, with one blue ear, and a spot on its side,—being an exact description of Mr. George Davis's favourite Helen, who followed her master's steps like his shadow, and was standing behind him at this very instant. This prediction gained our gipsy half-a-crown; and master Welles—the thriving thrifty yeoman of the lea—she managed to win sixpence from his hard honest frugal hand, by a prophecy that his old brood mare, called Blackfoot, should bring forth twins; and Ned the blacksmith, who was known to court the tall nurse-maid at the mill—she got a shilling from Ned, simply by assuring him that his wife should have the longest coffin that ever was made in our wheelwright's shop. A most tempting prediction! ingeniously combining the prospect of winning and of surviving the lady of his heart—a promise equally adapted to the hot and cold fits of that ague, called love; lightening the fetters of wedlock; uniting in a breath the bridegroom and the widower. Ned was the best pleased of all her customers, and enforced his suit with such vigour, that he and the fair giantess were asked in church the next Sunday, and married at the fortnight's end.

No wonder that all the world—that is to say, all our world—were crazy to have their fortunes told—to enjoy the pleasure of hearing from such undoubted authority, that what they wished to be, should be. Amongst the most eager to take a peep into futurity, was our pretty maid Harriet, although her desire took the not unusual form of disclamation,—"nothing should induce her to have her fortune told, nothing upon earth!" "She never thought of the gipsy, not she!" and to prove the fact, she said so at least twenty times a day. Now Harriet's fortune seemed told already; her destiny was fixed. She, the belle of the village, was engaged, as every body knows, to our village beau, Joel Brent; they were only waiting for a little more money to marry; and as Joel was already head carter to our head farmer, and had some prospect of a bailiff's place, their union did not appear very distant. But Harriet, besides being a beauty, was a coquette, and her affection for her betrothed did not interfere with certain flirtations which came in like Isabella, "by-the-by," and occasionally cast a shadow of coolness between the lovers, which, however, Joel's cleverness and good humour generally contrived to chase away. There had probably been a little fracas in the present instance, for at the end of one of her daily professions of unfaith in gipsies and their predictions, she added, "that none but fools did believe them; that Joel had had his fortune told, and wanted to treat her to a prophecy—but she was not such a simpleton."

About half an hour after the delivery of this speech, I happened, in tying up a chrysanthemum, to go to our wood-yard for a stick of proper dimensions, and there, enclosed between the fagot-pile and the coal-shed, stood the gipsy, in the very act of palmistry, conning the lines of fate in Harriet's hand. Never was a stronger contrast than that between the old withered sibyl, dark as an Egyptian, with bright laughing eyes, and an expression of keen humour under all her affected solemnity, and our village beauty, tall, and plump, and fair, blooming as a rose, and simple as a dove. She was listening too intently to see me, but the fortune-teller did, and stopped so suddenly, that her attention was awakened and the intruder discovered.

Harriet at first meditated a denial. She called up a pretty innocent unconcerned look; answered my silence (for I never spoke a word) by muttering something about "coals for the parlour;" and catching up my new-painted green watering-pot, instead of the coal-scuttle, began filling it with all her might, to the unspeakable discomfiture of that useful utensil, on which the dingy dust stuck like birdlime—and of her own clean apron, which exhibited a curious interchange of black and green on a white ground. During the process of filling the watering-pot, Harriet made divers signs to the gipsy to decamp. The old sibyl, however, budged not a foot, influenced probably by two reasons, one, the hope of securing a customer in the new comer, whose appearance is generally, I am afraid, the very reverse of dignified, rather merry than wise; the other, a genuine fear of passing through the yard-gate, on the outside of which a much more imposing person, my greyhound Mayflower, who has a sort of beadle instinct anent drunkards and pilferers, and disorderly persons of all sorts, stood barking most furiously.

This instinct is one of May's remarkable qualities. Dogs are all, more or less, physiognomists, and commonly pretty determined aristocrats, fond of the fine and averse to the shabby, distinguishing with a nice accuracy, the master castes from the pariahs of the world. But May's power of perception is another matter, more, as it were, moral. She has no objection to honest rags; can away with dirt, or age, or ugliness, or any such accident, and, except just at home, makes no distinction between kitchen and parlour. Her intuition points entirely to the race of people commonly called suspicious, on whom she pounces at a

glance. What a constable she would have made! What a jewel of a thief-taker! Pity that those four feet should stand in the way of her preferment! she might have risen to be a Bow-street officer. As it is, we make the gift useful in a small way. In the matter of hiring and marketing, the whole village likes to consult May. Many a chap has stared when she has been whistled up to give her opinion as to his honesty; and many a pig bargain has gone off on her veto. Our neighbour, mine host of the Rose, used constantly to follow her judgment in the selection of his lodgers. His house was never so orderly as when under her government. At last he found out that she abhorred tipplers as well as thieves—indeed, she actually barked away three of his best customers; and he left off appealing to her sagacity, since which he has, at different times, lost three silver spoons and a leg of mutton. With every one else May is an oracle. Not only in the case of wayfarers and vagrants, but amongst our own people, her fancies are quite a touchstone. A certain hump-backed cobbler, for instance—May cannot abide him, and I don't think he has had so much as a job of heel-piecing to do since her dislike became public. She really took away his character.

Longer than I have taken to relate Mayflower's accomplishments stood we, like the folks in the Critic, at a dead lock; May, who probably regarded the gipsy as a sort of rival, an interloper on her oracular domain, barking with the voice of a lioness—the gipsy trying to persuade me into having my fortune told—and I endeavouring to prevail on May to let the gipsy pass. Both attempts were unsuccessful: and the fair consulter of destiny, who had by this time recovered from the shame of her detection, extricated us from our dilemma by smuggling the old woman away through the house.

Of course Harriet was exposed to some raillery, and a good deal of questioning about her future fate, as to which she preserved an obstinate, but evidently satisfied silence. At the end of three days, however—my readers are, I hope, learned enough in gipsy lore to know that, unless kept secret for three entire days, no prediction can come true—at the end of three days, when all the family except herself had forgotten the story, our pretty soubrette, half bursting with the long retention, took the opportunity of lacing on my new half-boots to reveal the prophecy. "She was to see within the week, and this was Saturday, the young man, the real young man, whom she was to marry." "Why, Harriet, you know poor Joel." "Joel, indeed! the gipsy said that the young man, the real young man, was to ride up to the house drest in a dark great-coat (and Joel never wore a great-coat in his life—all the world knew that he wore smock-frocks and jackets,) and mounted on a white horse—and where should Joel get a white horse?" "Had this real young man made his appearance yet?" "No; there had not been a white horse past the place since Tuesday: so it must certainly be to-day."

A good look-out did Harriet keep for white horses during this fateful Saturday, and plenty did she see. It was the market-day at B., and team after team came by with one, two, and three white horses; cart after cart, and gig after gig, each with a white steed: Colonel M.'s carriage, with its prancing pair—but still no horseman. At length one appeared; but he had a great-coat whiter than the animal he rode; another, but he was old farmer Lewington, a married man; a third, but he was little Lord L., a school-boy, on his Arabian pony. Besides, they all passed the house: and as the day wore on, Harriet began, alternately, to profess her old infidelity on the score of fortune-telling, and to let out certain apprehensions that if the gipsy did really possess the power of foreseeing events, and no such horseman arrived, she might possibly be unlucky enough to die an old maid—a fate for which, although the proper destiny of a coquette, our village beauty seemed to entertain a very decided aversion.

At last, just at dusk, just as Harriet, making believe to close our casement shutters, was taking her last peep up the road, something white appeared in the distance coming leisurely down the hill. Was it really a horse?—Was it not rather Titus Strong's cow driving home to milking? A minute or two dissipated that fear: it certainly was a horse, and as certainly it had a dark rider. Very slowly he descended the hill, pausing most provokingly at the end of the village, as if about to turn up the Vicarage-lane. He came on, however, and after another short stop at the Rose, rode full up to our little gate, and catching Harriet's hand as she was opening the wicket, displayed to the half-pleased, half-angry damsel, the smiling triumphant face of her own Joel Brent, equipped in a new great-coat, and mounted on his master's newly-purchased market nag. Oh, Joel! Joel! The gipsy! the gipsy!

LITTLE RACHEL.

In one of the wild nooks of heath land, which are set so prettily amidst our richly-timbered valleys, stands the cottage of Robert Ford, an industrious and substantial blacksmith. There is a striking appearance of dingy comfort about the whole demesne, forming as it does a sort of detached and isolated territory in the midst of the unenclosed common by which it is surrounded. The ample gar-

den, whose thick dusky quickset hedge runs along the high-road; the snug cottage whose gable-end abuts on the causeway; the neat court which parts the house from the long low-browed shop and forge; and the stable, cart-shed, and piggeries behind, have all an air of rustic opulence: even the clear irregular pond, half covered with ducks and geese, that adjoins, and the old pollard oak, with a milestone leaning against it, that overhangs the dwelling, seem in accordance with its consequence and character, and give finish and harmony to the picture.

The inhabitants were also in excellent keeping. Robert Ford, a stout, hearty, middle-aged man, sooty and grim as a collier, paced backward and forward between the house and the forge with the step of a man of substance, —his very leather apron had an air of importance; his wife Dinah, a merry comely woman, sat at the open door, in an amplitude of cap and gown and handkerchief, darning an eternal worsted stocking, and hailed the passers-by with the cheerful freedom of one well to do in the world: and their three sons, well-grown lads from sixteen to twenty, were the pride of the village for industry and good-humour—to say nothing of their hereditary love of cricket. On a Sunday, when they had on their best and cleanest faces, they were the handsomest youths in the parish. Robert Ford was proud of his boys, as well he might be, and Dinah was still prouder.

Altogether it was a happy family and a pretty scene; especially of an evening, when the forge was at work, and when the bright firelight shone through the large unglazed window, illumining with its strange red unearthly light, the group that stood round the anvil; showers of sparks flying from the heated iron, and the loud strokes of the sledge-hammer resounding over all the talking and laughing of the workmen, reinforced by three or four idlers who were lounging about the shop. It formed a picture, which in a summer evening, we could seldom pass without stopping to contemplate; besides, I had a road-side acquaintance with Mrs. Ford, had taken shelter in her cottage from thunder-storms and snow-storms, and even by daylight could not walk by without a friendly "How d'ye do."

Late in last autumn we observed an addition to the family, in the person of a pretty little shy lass, of some eight years old, a fair slim small-boned child, with delicate features, large blue eyes, a soft colour, light shining hair, and a remarkable neatness in her whole appearance. She seemed constantly busy, either sitting on a low stool by Dinah's side at needle-work, or gliding about the kitchen engaged in some household employment—for the wide open door generally favoured the passengers with a full view of the interior, from the fully-stored bacon-rack to the nicely swept hearth; and the little girl, if she perceived herself to be looked at, would slip behind the clock-case, or creep under the dresser to avoid notice. Mrs. Ford, when questioned as to her inmate, said that she was her husband's niece, the daughter of a younger brother, who had worked somewhere London-way, and had died lately, leaving a widow with eleven children in distressed circumstances. She added, that having no girl of their own, they had taken little Rachel for good and all; and vaunted much of her handiness, her sempstresship, and her scholarship, how she could read a chapter with the parish clerk, or make a shirt with the schoolmistress. Hereupon she called her to display her work, which was indeed extraordinary for so young a needle-woman; and would fain have had her exhibit her other accomplishment of reading; but the poor little maid hung down her head, and blushed up to her white temples, and almost cried, and though too frightened to run away, shrank back till she was fairly hidden behind her portly aunt; so that that performance was perforce pretermitted. — Mrs. Ford was rather scandalized at this shyness; and expostulated, coaxed and scolded, after the customary fashion on such occasions.— "Shame-facedness was," she said, "Rachel's only fault, and she believed the child could not help it. Her uncle and cousins were as fond of her as could be, but she was afraid of them all, and never had entered the shop since there she had been. Rachel," she added, "was singular in all her ways, and never spent a farthing on apples or ginger-bread, though she had a bran-new sixpence, which her uncle had given her for hemming his cravats; she believed that she was saving it to send home."

A month passed away, during which time, from the mere habit of seeing us frequently, Rachel became so far tamed as to behold me and my usual walking companion without much dismay; would drop her little curtsy without colouring so very deeply, and was even won to accept a bun from that dear companion's pocket, and to answer yes or no to his questions.

At the end of that period, as we were returning home in the twilight from a round of morning visits, we perceived a sort of confusion in the forge, and heard loud sounds of scolding from within the shop, mixed with bitter lamentations from without. On a nearer approach, we discovered that the object in distress, was an old acquaintance; a young Italian boy, such a wanderer from the Lake of Como, as he, whom Wordsworth has addressed so beautifully:

——"Or on thy head to poise a show
Of plaster-craft in seemly row;
The graceful form of milk-white steed,
Or bird that soared with Ganymede;
Or through our hamlets thou wilt bear
The sightless Milton with his hair

Around his placid temples curled,
And Shakspeare at his side——a freight,
If clay could think and mind were weight,
For him who bore the world!"

He passed us almost every day, carrying his tray full of images into every quarter of the village. We had often wondered how he could find vent for his commodities; but our farmers' wives patronize that branch of art; and Stefano, with his light firm step, his upright carriage, his dancing eyes, and his broken English, was an universal favourite.

At present the poor boy's keen Italian features and bright dark eyes were disfigured by crying; and his loud wailings and southern gesticulations bore witness to the extremity of his distress. The cause of his grief was visible in the half-empty tray that rested on the window of the forge, and the green parrot which lay in fragments on the footpath. The wrath of Robert Ford required some further explanation, which the presence of his worship instantly brought forth, although the enraged blacksmith was almost too angry to speak intelligibly.

It appeared that this youngster and favourite son, William, had been chaffering with Stefano for this identical green parrot, to present to Rachel, when a mischievous lad, running along the road, had knocked it from the window-sill, and reduced it to the state which we saw. So far was mere misfortune; and undoubtedly if left to himself, our good neighbour would have indemnified the little merchant; but poor Stefano, startled at the suddenness of the accident, trembling at the anger of the severe master on whose account he travelled the country, and probably in the darkness really mistaking the offender, unluckily accused William Ford of the overthrow; which accusation, although the assertion was instantly and humbly retracted on William's denial, so aroused the English blood of the father, a complete John Bull, that he was raving, till black in the face, against cheats and foreigners, and threatening the young Italian with whipping, and the treadmill, and justices, and stocks, when we made our appearance, and the storm, having nearly exhausted its fury, gradually abated.

By this time, however, the clamour had attracted a little crowd of lookers-on from the house and the road, amongst the rest Mrs. Ford, and, peeping behind her aunt, little Rachel. Stefano continued to exclaim in his imperfect accent "He will beat me!" and to sob and crouch and shiver, as if actually suffering under the impending chastisement. It was impossible not to sympathise with such a reality of distress, although we felt that an English boy, similarly situated, would have been too stout-hearted not to restrain its expression. "Six-pence!" and "my master will beat me!" intermixed with fresh bursts of crying, were all his answers to the various inquiries as to the amount of his loss, with which he was assailed; and young William Ford, "a lad of grace," was approaching his hand to his pocket, and my dear companion had just drawn forth his purse, when the good intentions of the one were arrested by the stern commands of his father, and the other was stopped by the re-appearance of Rachel, who had run back to the house, and now darted through the group holding out her own new sixpence,—her hoarded sixpence, and put it into Stefano's hand!

It may be imagined that the dear child was no loser by her generosity; she was loaded with caresses by every one, which, too much excited to feel her bashfulness, she not only endured but returned. Her uncle, thus rebuked by an infant, was touched almost to tears. He folded her in his arms, kissed her and blessed her; gave Stefano half a crown for the precious sixpence, and swore to keep it as a relique and a lesson as long as he lived.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

MY GODFATHER'S MANŒUVRING.

I HAVE said that my dear godfather was a great match-maker. One of his exploits in this way, which occurred during my second visit to him and Mrs. Evelyn, I am now about to relate.

Amongst the many distant cousins to whom I was introduced in that northern region, was a young kinswoman by the name of Hervey —an orphan heiress of considerable fortune, who lived in the same town and the same street with my godfather, under the protection of a lady who had been the governess of her childhood, and continued with her as the friend of her youth. Sooth to say, their friendship was of that tender and sentimental sort at which the world, the wicked world, is so naughty as to laugh. Miss Reid and Miss Hervey were names quite as inseparable as goose and apple-sauce, or tongue and chicken. They regularly made their appearance together, and there would have appeared I know not what of impropriety in speaking of either singly; it would have looked like a tearing asunder of the "double cherry," respecting which, in their case, even the "seeming parted," would have been held too disjunctive a phrase, so tender and inseparable was their union; although as far as resemblance went, no simile could be more inapplicable. Never were two people more unlike in mind and person.

Lucy Hervey was a pretty little woman of six and twenty; but from a delicate figure, delicate features, and a most delicate complexion, looking much younger. Perhaps the

total absence of strong expression, the mildness and simplicity of her countenance, and the artlessness and docility of her manner might conduce to the mistake. She was a sweet gentle creature, generous and affectionate; and not wanting in sense, although her entire reliance on her friend's judgment, and constant habit of obedience to her wishes rendered the use of it somewhat rare.

Miss Reid was a tall awkward woman, raw-boned, lank and huge, just what one fancies a man would be in petticoats; with a face that, except the beard (certainly she had no beard) might have favoured the supposition; so brown and bony and stern and ill-favoured was her unfortunate visage. In one point, she was lucky. There was no guessing at her age, certainly not within ten years; nor within twenty. She looked old: but with that figure, those features, and that complexion, she must have looked old at eighteen. To guess her age was impossible. Her voice was deep and dictatorial; her manner rough and assuming; and her conversation unmercifully sensible and oracular—"full of wise saws and modern instances." For the rest, in spite of her inauspicious exterior, she was a good sort of disagreeable woman: charitable and kind in her way; genuinely fond of Lucy Hervey, whom she petted and scolded and coaxed and managed just as a nurse manages a child: and tolerably well liked of all her acquaintance—except Mr. Evelyn, who had been at war with her for the last nine years, on the subject of his fair cousin's marriage; and had, at last, come to regard her pretty much as a prime minister may look on an opposition leader,—as a regular opponent, an obstacle to be put down or swept away. I verily believe that he hated her as much as his kindly nature could hate any body.

To be sure, it was no slight grievance to have so fair a subject for his matrimonial speculations, a kinswoman too, just under his very eye, and to find all his plans thwarted by that inexorable gouvernante—more especially, as, without her aid, it was morally certain that the pretty Lucy would never have had the heart to say *no* to any body. Ever since Miss Hervey was seventeen, my dear godpapa had been scheming for her advantage. It was quite melancholy to hear him count up the husbands she might have had,—beginning at the Duke's son, her partner at her first race ball,—and ending with the young newly-arrived physician, his last protegé: "now," he said, "she might die an old maid; he had done with her." And there did actually appear to be a cessation of all his matrimonial plans in that quarter. Miss Reid herself laid aside her distrust of him; and a truce, if not a peace, was tacitly concluded between these sturdy antagonists. Mr. Evelyn seemed to have given up the game—a strange thing for him to do whilst he had a pawn left! But so it was. His adversary had the board all to herself; and was in as good a humour, as a winning player generally is. Miss Reid was never remembered so amiable. We saw them almost every day, as the fashion is amongst neighbours in small towns, and used to ride and walk together continually—although Lucy, whose health was delicate, frequently declined accompanying us on our more distant excursions.

Our usual beau, besides the dear godpapa, was a Mr. Morris, the curate of the parish—an uncouth, gawky, lengthy man, with an astounding Westmoreland dialect, and a most portentous laugh. Really his ha! ha! was quite a shock to the nerves—a sort of oral shower-bath; so sudden and so startling was the explosion. In loudness it resembled half a dozen ordinary laughs "rolled into one;" and as the gentleman was of a facetious disposition and chorused his own good things as well as those of other people, with his awful cachination, it was no joking matter. But he was so excellent a person, so cordial, so jovial, so simple-hearted, and so contented with a lot none of the most prosperous, that one could not help liking him, laugh and all. He was a widower, with one only son, a Cambridge scholar, of whom he was deservedly proud. Edward Morris, besides his academical honours (I think he had been senior wrangler of his year), was a very fine young man, with an intelligent countenance, but exceedingly shy, silent, and abstracted. I could not help thinking the poor youth was in love; but his father and Mr. Evelyn laid the whole blame on the mathematics. He would sit sometimes for an hour together, immersed, as they said, in his calculations, with his eyes fixed on Lucy Hervey, as if her sweet face had been the problem he was solving. But your mathematicians are privileged people; and so apparently my fair cousin thought, for she took no notice, unless by blushing a shade the deeper. It was worth while to look at Lucy Hervey, when Edward Morris was gazing on her in his absent fits; her cheeks were as red as a rose.

How these blushes came to escape the notice of Miss Reid, I cannot tell,—unless she might happen to have her own attention engrossed by Edward's father. For certain, that original paid her, in his odd way, great attention; was her constant beau in our walking-parties; sate by her side at dinner; and manœuvred to get her for his partner at whist. She had the benefit of his best bon-mots, and his loudest laughs; and she seemed to me not to dislike that portentous sound, so much as might have been expected from a lady of her particularity. I ventured to hint my observations to Mr. Evelyn; who chuckled, laid his forefinger against his nose, rubbed his hands, and called me a simpleton.

Affairs were in this position, when one night

just at going to bed, my good godfather, with a little air of mystery (no uncommon preparation to his most trifling plans), made an appointment to walk with me before breakfast, as far as a pet farm, about a mile out of the town, the superintendence of which was one of his greatest amusements. Early the next morning, the house-maid, who usually attended me, made her appearance, and told me that her master was waiting for me, that I must make haste, and that he desired I would be smart, as he expected a party to breakfast at the farm. This sort of injunction is seldom thrown away on a damsel of eighteen; accordingly I adjusted, with all possible despatch, a new blue silk pelisse, and sallied forth into the corridor, which I heard him pacing as impatiently as might be. There, to my no small consternation, instead of the usual gallant compliments of the most gallant of godfathers, I was received with very disapproving glances; told that I looked like an old woman in that dowdy-coloured pelisse, and conjured to exchange it for a white gown. Half affronted, I nevertheless obeyed; doffed the pelisse, and donned the white gown, as ordered; and being greeted this time with a bright smile, and a chuck under the chin, we set out in high good-humour on our expedition.

Instead, however, of proceeding straight to the farm, Mr. Evelyn made a slight deviation from our course, turning down the market-place, and into the warehouse of a certain Mrs. Bennet, milliner and mantua-maker, a dashing over-dressed dame, who presided over the fashions for ten miles round, and marshalled a compter full of caps and bonnets at one side of the shop, whilst her husband, an obsequious civil bowing tradesman, dealt out gloves and stockings at the other. A little dark parlour behind was common to both. Into this den was I ushered; and Mrs. Bennet, with many apologies, began, at a signal from my godfather, to divest me of all my superfluous blueness, silk handkerchief, sash, and wrist-ribbons, (for with the constancy which is born of opposition, I had, in relinquishing my obnoxious pelisse, clung firmly to the obnoxious colour) replacing them by white satin ribbons and a beautiful white shawl; and, finally, exchanging my straw bonnet for one of white silk, with a deep lace veil—that piece of delicate finery which all women delight in. Whilst I was now admiring the richness of the genuine Brussels point, and now looking at myself in a little glass which Mrs. Bennet was holding to my face, for the better display of her millinery—the bonnet, to do her justice, was pretty and becoming,—during this engrossing contemplation, her smooth silky husband crept behind me with the stealthy pace of a cat, and relying, as it seems, on my pre-occupation, actually drew my York-tan gloves from my astonished hands, and substituted a pair of his own best white kid. This operation being completed, my godpapa, putting his forefinger to his lip in token of secresy, hurried me with a look of great triumph, from the shop.

He walked at a rapid pace; and, between quick motion and amazement, I was too much out of breath to utter a word, till we had passed the old gothic castle at the end of the town, and crossed the long bridge that spans its wide and winding river. I then rained questions on my dear old friend, who chuckled and nodded, and vented two or three half laughs, but vouchsafed nothing tending to a reply. At length we came to a spot where the road turned suddenly to the left, (the way to the farm), whilst, right before us, rose a knoll, on which stood the church, a large, heavy, massive building, almost a cathedral, finely relieved by the range of woody hills which shut in the landscape. A turning gate, with a tall straight cypress on either side, led into the churchyard; and through this gate Mr. Evelyn passed. The church door was a little a-jar, and, through the crevice, was seen peeping the long red nose of the old clerk, a Bardolphian personage, to whom my godfather, who loved to oblige people in their own way, sometimes did the questionable service of clearing off his score at the Greyhound; his red nose and a skirt of his shabby black coat peeped through the porch; whilst, behind one of the buttresses, glimmered, for an instant, the white drapery of a female figure. I did not need these indications to convince me that a wedding was the object in view; that had been certain from the first cashiering of my blue ribbons; but I was still at a loss, as to the parties; and felt quite relieved by Mr. Evelyn's question, "Pray, my dear, were you ever a bride's-maid?"—since in the extremity of my perplexity, I had had something like an apprehension that an unknown beau might appear at the call of this mighty manager, and I be destined to play the part of bride myself. Comforted to find that I was only to enact the confidante, I had now leisure to be exceedingly curious as to my prima donna. My curiosity was speedily gratified.

On entering the church we had found only a neighbouring clergyman, not Mr. Morris, at the altar; and, looking round at the opening of another door, I perceive the worthy curate in a jetty clerical suit, bristling with newness, leading Miss Reid be-flounced and be-scarfed and be-veiled and be-plumed, and all in a flutter of bridal finery, in great state, up the aisle. Mr. Evelyn advanced to meet them, took the lady's fair hand from Mr. Morris, and led her along with all the grace of an old courtier; I fell into the procession at the proper place; the amiable pair were duly married, and I thought my office over. I was never more mistaken in my life.

In the midst of the customary confusion of

kissing and wishing joy, and writing and signing registers and certificates, which form so important and disagreeable a part of that disagreeable and important ceremony, Mr. Evelyn had vanished; and just as the bride was inquiring for him, with the intention of leaving the church, he reappeared through the very same side-door which had admitted the first happy couple, leading Lucy Hervey, and followed by Edward Morris. The father evidently expected them; the new step-mother as evidently did not. Never did a thief, taken in the manner, seem more astonished than that sage gouvernante! Lucy on her part, blushed and hung back, and looked shyer and prettier than ever; the old clerk grinned; the clergyman, who had shown some symptoms of astonishment at the first wedding, now smiled to Mr. Evelyn, as if this accounted, and made amends for it; whilst the dear god-papa himself chuckled and nodded and rubbed his hands, and chucked both bride and bride's-maid under the chin, and seemed ready to cut capers for joy. Again the book was opened at the page of destiny; again I held the milk-white glove; and after nine years of unsuccessful manœuvring, my cousin Lucy was married. It was, undoubtedly, the most triumphant event of the good old man's life; and I don't believe that either couple ever saw cause to regret the dexterity in the art of match-making which produced their double union. They have been as happy as people usually are in this work a-day world, especially the young mathematician and his pretty wife; and their wedding-day is still remembered in W.; for besides his munificence to singer, ringer, sexton and clerk, Mr. Evelyn roasted two sheep on the occasion, gave away ten bride-cakes, and made the whole town tipsy.

THE YOUNG GIPSY.

The weather continuing fine and dry, I did not fail to revisit my gipsy encampment, which became more picturesque every day in the bright sungleams and lengthening shadows of a most brilliant autumn. A slight frost had strewed the green lane with the light yellow leaves of the elm — those leaves on whose yielding crispness it is so pleasant to tread, and which it is so much pleasanter to watch whirling along, "thin dancers upon air," in the fresh October breeze; whilst the reddened beech, and spotted sycamore, and the rich oaks dropping with acorns, their foliage just edging into its deep orange brown, added all the magic of colour to the original beauty of the scenery. It was undoubtedly the prettiest walk in the neighbourhood, and the one which I frequented the most.

Ever since the adventure of May, the old fortune-teller and I understood each other perfectly. She knew that I was no client, no patient, no customer (which is the fittest name for a goosecap who goes to a gipsy to ask what is to befall her?) but she also knew that I was no enemy either to her or her profession; for, after all, if people choose to amuse themselves by being simpletons, it is no part of their neighbours' business to hinder them. I, on my side, liked the old gipsy exceedingly; I liked both her humour and her good-humour, and had a real respect for her cleverness. We always interchanged a smile and a nod, meet where we might. May, too, had become accustomed to the whole party. The gift of a bone from the cauldron — a bare bone — your well-fed dog likes nothing so well as such a wind-fall, and if stolen the relish is higher — a bare bone brought about the reconciliation. I am sorry to accuse May of accepting a bribe, but such was the fact. She now looked at the fortune-teller with great complacency, would let the boys stroke her long neck, and in her turn would condescend to frolic with their shabby curs, who, trained to a cat-like caution and mistrust of their superiors, were as much alarmed at her advances as if a lioness had offered herself as their play-fellow. There was no escaping her civility, however, so they submitted to their fate, and really seemed astonished to find themselves alive when the gambol was over. One of them, who from a tail turned over his back like a squirrel, and an amazingly snub nose, had certainly some mixture of the pug in his composition, took a great fancy to her when his fright was past: which she repaid by the sort of scornful kindness, the despotic protection proper to her as a beauty, and a favourite, and a high-blooded greyhound—always a most proud and stately creature. The poor little mongrel used regularly to come jumping to meet her, and she as regularly turned him over and over and over, and round and round and round, like a tetotum. He liked it apparently, for he never failed to come and court the tossing whenever she went near him.

The person most interesting to me of the whole party was the young girl. She was remarkably pretty, and of the peculiar prettiness which is so frequently found amongst that singular people. Her face resembled those which Sir Joshua has often painted — rosy, round, and bright, set in such a profusion of dark curls, lighted by such eyes, and such a smile! and she smiled whenever you looked at her — she could not help it. Her figure was light and small, of low stature, and with an air of great youthfulness. In her dress she was, for a gipsy, surprisingly tidy. For the most part, that ambulatory race have a preference for rags, as forming their most appropriate wardrobe, being a part of their tools of trade, their insignia of office. I do

not imagine that Harriet's friend, the fortune-teller, would have exchanged her stained tattered cloak for the thickest and brightest red cardinal that ever came out of a woollen-draper's shop. And she would have been a loser if she had. Take away that mysterious mantle, and a great part of her reputation would go too. There is much virtue in an old cloak. I question if the simplest of her clients, even Harriet herself, would have consulted her in a new one. But the young girl was tidy; not only accurately clean, and with clothes neatly and nicely adjusted to her trim little form, but with the rents darned, and the holes patched, in a way that I should be glad to see equalled by our own villagers.

Her manners were quite as ungipsy-like as her apparel, and so was her conversation; for I could not help talking to her, and was much pleased with her frankness and innocence, and the directness and simplicity of her answers. She was not the least shy; on the contrary, there was a straightforward look, a fixing of her sweet eyes full of pleasure and reliance right upon you, which, in the description, might seem almost too assured, but which, in reality, no more resembled vulgar assurance than did the kindred artlessness of Shakspeare's Miranda. It seems strange to liken a gipsy girl to that loveliest creation of genius; but I never saw that innocent gaze without being sure that just with such a look of pleased attention, of affectionate curiosity, did the island princess listen to Ferdinand.

All that she knew of her little story she told without scruple, in a young liquid voice, and with a little curtsy between every answer, that became her extremely. "Her name," said she, "was Fanny. She had no father or mother; they were dead; and she and her brothers lived with her grandmother. They lived always out of doors, sometimes in one place—sometimes in another; but she should like always to live under that oak-tree, it was so pleasant. Her grandmother was very good to them all, only rather particular. She loved her very much; and she loved Dick (her eldest brother,) though he was a sad unlucky boy, to be sure. She was afraid he would come to some bad end"—

And, indeed, Dick at that moment seemed in imminent danger of verifying his sister's prediction. He had been trying for a gleaning of nuts amongst the tall hazels on the top of a bank, which, flanked by a deep ditch, separated the coppice from the green. We had heard him for the last five minutes smashing and crashing away at a prodigious rate, swinging himself from stalk to stalk, and tugging and climbing like a sailor or a monkey; and now at the very instant of Fanny's uttering this prophecy, having missed a particularly venturesome grasp, he was impelled forward by the rebound of the branches, and fell into the ditch with a tremendous report, bringing half the nuttery after him, and giving us all a notion that he had broken his neck. His time, however was not yet come: he was on his feet again in half a minute, and in another half minute we again heard him rustling amongst the hazel boughs; and I went on with our talk, which the fright and scolding, consequent on this accident, had interrupted. My readers are of course aware, that when any one meets with a fall, the approved medicament of the most affectionate relatives is a good dose of scolding.

"She liked Dick," she continued, "in spite of his unluckiness—he was so quick and good-humoured; but the person she loved most was her youngest brother, Willy. Willy was the best boy in the world, he would do any thing she told him" (indeed the poor child was in the very act of picking up acorns, under her inspection, to sell, as I afterwards found, in the village,) "and never got into mischief, or told a lie in his life; she had had the care of him ever since he was born, and she wished she could get him a place." By this time the little boy had crept towards us, and still collecting the acorns in his small brown hands, had turned up his keen intelligent face, and was listening with great interest to our conversation. "A place!" said I, much surprised. "Yes," replied she firmly, "a place. 'Twould be a fine thing for my poor Willy to have a house over him in the cold winter nights." And with a grave tenderness, that might have beseemed a young mother, she stooped her head over the boy and kissed him. "But *you* sleep out of doors in the cold winter nights, Fanny!"—"Me! oh, I don't mind it, and sometimes we creep into a barn. But poor Willy! If I could but get Willy a place, my lady!"

This "my lady," the first gipsy word that Fanny had uttered, lost all that it would have had of unpleasing in the generosity and affectionateness of the motive. I could not help promising to recommend her Willy, although I could not hold out any very strong hopes of success, and we parted, Fanny following me, with thanks upon thanks, almost to the end of the lane.

Two days after I again saw my pretty gipsy; she was standing by the side of our gate, too modest even to enter the court, waiting for my coming out to speak to me. I brought her into the hall, and was almost equally delighted to see her, and to hear her news; for although I had most faithfully performed my promise, by mentioning master Willy to every body likely to want a servant of his qualifications, I had seen enough in the course of my canvass to convince me that a gipsy boy of eight years old would be a difficult protegé to provide for.

Fanny's errand relieved my perplexity. She came to tell me that Willy had gotten a place—"That Thomas Lamb, my lord's head gamekeeper, had hired him to tend his horse and

his cow, and serve the pigs, and feed the dogs, and dig the garden, and clean the shoes and knives, and run errands—in short, to be a man of all work. Willy was gone that very morning.—He had cried to part with her, and she had almost cried herself, she should miss him so; he was like her own child. But then it was such a great place; and Thomas Lamb seemed such a kind master—talked of new clothing him, and meant him to wear shoes and stockings, and was very kind indeed. But poor Willy had cried sadly at leaving her,"—and the sweet matronly elder sister fairly cried too.

I comforted her all I could, first by praises of Thomas Lamb, who happened to be of my acquaintance, and was indeed the very master whom, had I had the choice, I would have selected for Willy; and secondly, by the gift of some unconsidered trifles, which one should have been ashamed to offer to any one who had ever had a house over her head, but which the pretty gipsy girl received with transport, especially some working materials of the commonest sort. Poor Fanny had never known the luxury of a thimble before; it was as new to her fingers as shoes and stockings were likely to be to Willy's feet. She forgot her sorrows, and tripped home to her oak-tree the happiest of the happy.

Thomas Lamb, Willy's new master, was, as I have said, of my acquaintance. He was a remarkably fine young man, and as well-mannered as those of his calling usually are. Generally speaking, there are no persons, excepting real gentlemen, so gentlemanly as game-keepers. They keep good company.—The beautiful and graceful creatures whom they at once preserve and pursue, and the equally noble and generous animals whom they train, are their principal associates; and even by their masters they are regarded rather as companions than as servants. They attend them in their sports more as guides and leaders than as followers, pursuing a common recreation with equal enjoyment, and often with superior skill. Game-keepers are almost always well-behaved, and Thomas Lamb was eminently so. He had quite the look of a man of fashion; the person, the carriage, the air. His figure was tall and striking; his features delicately carved, with a paleness of complexion, and a slight appearance of ill-health that added to their elegance. In short, he was exactly what the ladies would have called interesting in a gentleman; and the gentleness of his voice and manner, and the constant propriety of his deportment, tended to confirm the impression.

Luckily for him, however, this delicacy and refinement lay chiefly on the surface. His constitution, habits, and temper were much better fitted to his situation, much hardier and heartier than they appeared to be. He was still a bachelor, and lived by himself in a cottage, almost as lonely as if it had been placed in a desert island. It stood in the centre of his preserves, in the midst of a wilderness of coppice and woodland, accessible only by a narrow winding path, and at least a mile from the nearest habitation. When you had threaded the labyrinth, and were fairly arrived in Thomas's dominion, it was a pretty territory. A low thatched cottage, very irregularly built, with a porch before the door, and a vine half-covering the casements; a garden a good deal neglected, (Thomas Lamb's four-footed subjects, the hares, took care to eat up all his flowers; hares are animals of taste, and are particularly fond of pinks and carnations, the rogues!) an orchard and a meadow, completed the demesne. There was, also, a commodious dog-kennel, and a stable, of which the outside was completely covered with the trophies of Thomas's industry—kites, jackdaws, magpies, hawks, crows, and owls, nailed by the wings, *displayed*, as they say in heraldry, against the wall, with polecats, weazels, stoats, and hedgehogs figuring at their side, a perfect menagerie of dead game-killers.*

But the prettiest part of this woodland cottage, was the real living game that flitted about it, as tame as barn-door fowls; partridges flocking to be fed, as if there were not a dog, or a gun, or a man in the world; pheasants, glorious creatures! coming at a call; hares almost as fearless as Cowper's, that would stand to let you look at them; would let you approach quite near, before they raised one quivering ear and darted off; and that even then, when the instinct of timidity was aroused, would turn at a safe distance to look again. Poor, pretty things! What a pity it seemed to kill them!

Such was to be Willy's future habitation. The day after he had entered upon his place, I had an opportunity of offering my double congratulations, to the master on his new servant, to the servant on his new master.—Whilst taking my usual walk, I found Thomas Lamb, Dick, Willy, and Fanny, about halfway up the lane, engaged in the animating sport of unearthing a weazel, which one of the gipsy dogs followed into a hole by the ditch-side. The boys showed great sportsmanship on this occasion; and so did their poor curs, who with their whole bodies inserted into different branches of the burrow, and nothing visible but their tails (the one, the long puggish brush of which I have already made mention, the other, a terrier-like stump,

* Foxes, the destruction of which is so great an object in a pheasant preserve, never are displayed, especially if there be a pack of hounds in the neighbourhood. That odious part of a game-keeper's occupation is as quietly and unostentatiously performed as any operation of gunnery can be. Lords of manors will even affect to preserve foxes—Heaven forgive them!—just as an unpopular ministry is sure to talk of protecting the liberty of the subject.

that maintained an incessant wag), continued to dig and scratch, throwing out showers of earth, and whining with impatience and eagerness. Every now and then, when quite gasping and exhausted, they came out for a moment's air; whilst the boys took their turn, poking with a long stick, or loosening the ground with their hands, and Thomas stood by superintending and encouraging both dog and boy, and occasionally cutting a root or a bramble that impeded their progress. Fanny, also, entered into the pursuit with great interest, dropping here and there a word of advice, as nobody can help doing when they see others in perplexity. In spite of all these aids, the mining operation proceeded so slowly, that the experienced keeper sent off his new attendant for a spade to dig out the vermin, and I pursued my walk.

After this encounter, it so happened that I never went near the gipsy tent without meeting Thomas Lamb—sometimes on foot, sometimes on his pony; now with a gun, now without; but always loitering near the oak-tree, and always, as it seemed, reluctant to be seen. It was very unlike Thomas's usual manner to seem ashamed of being caught in any place, or in any company; but so it was. Did he go to the ancient sibyl to get his fortune told? or was Fanny the attraction? A very short time solved the query.

One night, towards the end of the month, the keeper presented himself at our house on justice business. He wanted a summons for some poachers who had been committing depredations in the preserve. Thomas was a great favourite; and was, of course, immediately admitted, his examination taken, and his request complied with. "But how," said the magistrate, looking up from the summons which he was signing, "how can you expect, Thomas, to keep your pheasants, when that gipsy boy with his finders has pitched his tent just in the midst of your best coppices, killing more game than half the poachers in the country?" "Why, as to the gipsy, sir," replied Thomas, "Fanny is as good a girl—" "I was not talking of Fanny," interrupted the man of warrants, smiling—"as good a girl," pursued Thomas — "A very pretty girl!" ejaculated his worship,—"as good a girl," resumed Thomas, "as ever trod the earth!"—"A sweet pretty creature, certainly," was again the provoking reply. "Ah, sir, if you could but hear how her little brother talks of her!"—"Why, Thomas, this gipsy has made an impression."—"Ah, sir! she is such a good girl!"—and the next day they were married.

It was a measure to set every tongue in the village a wagging: for Thomas, besides his personal good gifts, was well to do in the world—my lord's head keeper, and prime favourite. He might have pretended to any farmer's daughter in the parish: every body cried out against the match. It was rather a bold measure, certainly; but I think it will end well. They are, beyond a doubt, the handsomest couple in these parts; and as the fortune-teller and her eldest grandson have had the good sense to decamp, and Fanny, besides being the most grateful and affectionate creature on earth, turns out clever and docile, and comports herself just as if she had lived in a house all her days, there are some hopes that in process of time her sin of gipsyism may be forgiven, and Mrs. Lamb be considered as visitable, at least by her next neighbours, the wives of the shoemaker and the parish clerk. At present, I am sorry to have it to say, that these worthy persons have sent both Thomas and her to Coventry—a misfortune which they endure with singular resignation.

And now, since farewell must be said, I do not know that I can find a fitter moment. We are all as happy as people in a last page ought to be;—the lovers in an union of affection, the rest of the village in the news and the wonderment. Farewell, then, courteous reader!

"To all, to each, a fair good night,
And pleasant dreams and slumbers light!"

PREFACE.*

Those gentle readers, be they few or many, who may have paid the two Volumes entitled Our Village the compliment of holding them in recollection, will easily recognize the same locality, the same class of people, and often the same individuals, in the present collection of Country Stories, which is, indeed, at all points, a continuation of the former work. The Authoress has only to hope that it may be received with similar indulgence; and to deprecate a too literal construction of facts, and names, and dates.

INTRODUCTION.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

"Any changes in our Village since the last advices? What news of May and Lizzy and Fanny and Lucy? And does the Loddon continue to flow as brightly as when we gathered musk-roses together in the old grounds of Aberleigh?"

These interrogatories formed part of a letter from India, written by my pretty friend Emily

*To the third volume, as originally published.

L., now the wife of an officer of rank on that station; and my answer to her kind questioning, may serve to satisfy the curiosity of other gentle readers as to the general state of our little commonwealth, and form no unfit introduction to the more detailed narratives that follow. They who condescended to read the letter-press will have the advantage of my fair correspondent. Indeed I doubt whether she herself may not derive her first information from the printed book; my epistle being, as far as I can judge, wholly illegible to all but the writer. Never was such a manuscript seen! for being restricted to one sheet of paper, and having a good deal of miscellaneous matter to discuss before entering on our village affairs, I had fallen into a silly fashion of crossing, not uncommon amongst young ladies; so that my letter first written horizontally like other people's, then perpendicularly to form a sort of checker-work, then diagonally in red ink,—the very crossings crossed!—and every nook and cranny, the part under the seal, the corner where the date stood, covered with small lines in an invisible hand, the whole letter became a mass of mysterious marks, a puzzle like a Coptic inscription, or a state paper in cypher to those unacquainted with the key. I must put an extract into print if only for the benefit of my fair correspondent; and here it is:

"'Any change in our village?' say you.—Why no, not much. In the outward world scarcely any, except the erection of two handsome red houses on the outskirts, which look very ugly just at present, simply because the eye and the landscape are unaccustomed to them, but which will set us off amazingly when the trees and the buildings become used to each other, and the glaring new tint is toned down by that great artist, the weather. For the rest the street remains quite in *statu quo*, unless we may count for alteration a *rifacimento* which is taken place in the dwelling of our worthy neighbour the baker, whose oven fell in last week, and is in the act of being re-constructed by a scientific bricklayer (Ah dear me! I dare say he hath a finer name for his calling) from the good town of B. The precise merits of this new oven I cannot pretend to explain, although they have been over and over explained to me; I only know that it is to be heated on some new-fangled principle, hot water, or hot air, or steam, or cinders, which is to cost just nothing, and is to produce the staff of life, crust and crum, in such excellence as hath not been equalled since Alfred, the first baker of quality on record, had the misfortune to scorch his hostess's cake. I suspect that the result of this experiment will not be very dissimilar; but at present it is a great point of interest to the busy and the idle. Half of our cricketers are there helping or hindering, and all the children of the street are assembled to watch the operation, or clustered into groups near the door.

"You used to say, and there was too much truth in the assertion, that for pigs, geese and children, and their concomitants, dirt and noise, this pretty place was unrivalled. But then you were here when the two first evils were at their height, in June and July. At present the geese have felt the stroke of Michaelmas, and are fatted and thinned; pigs too have diminished; though as the children are proportionably increased, we are not much better off in point of cleanliness, and much worse in regard to noise:—a pig being, except just when ringing or killing, a tolerably silent animal; and a goose, in spite of the old Roman story, only vociferous by fits and starts; whereas little boys and little girls—at least, the little boys and little girls hereabout—seem on the full cry or the full shout from sunrise to sunset. Even the dinner hour, that putter down of din in most civilized countries, makes no pause amongst our small people. The nightingale who sings all day and all night to solace his brooding mate, is but a type of their unwearying power of voice. His sweet harmony doth find intervals; their discord hath none.

"And yet they have light hearts too, poor urchins; witness Dame Wilson's three sunburnt ragged boys who with Ben Kirby and a few comrades of lesser note, are bawling and squabbling at marbles on one side of the road; and Master Andrews's four fair-haired girls who are scrambling and squalling at baseball on the other! How happy they are, poor things, and with how few of the implements of happiness beyond sunshine and liberty and their own young life! Even the baker's and the wheelwright's children are stealing a run and a race up the hill as they go to school, and managing to make quite noise enough to attract attention; although being in whole frocks, they are rather more quiet than their compeers in tatters, and hardly so merry; it being an axiom which I have rarely known to fail in country life, that the poorer the urchin, the fuller of glee. Short of starvation, nothing tames the elves. Blessed triumph of youthful spirits! merciful compensation for a thousand wants!

"Even as I write there is another childish rabble passing the window in the wake of our friend Mr. Moore's donkey-cart. You remember Mr. Moore's fine strawberries, Emily? the real wood strawberry, which looked like a gem, and smelt like a nosegay? But strawberries are out of season now; and the donkey cart has changed its gay summer freight of fruit and flowers, and is coming down the hill heavily laden with a full dirty homely load of huge red potatoes, to vend per peck and gallon through the village, or perhaps to carry as far as B., where some amateurs of the 'lazy root,' curious in such underground

matters, are constant customers to Mr. Moore's 'pink eyes.' It is not, however, for love of that meritorious vegetable that the boys follow the potatoe-cart. One corner is parted off for apples, in hopes to tempt our thrifty housewives into the cheap extravagance of a pudding or a pie. Half a bushel of apples as yellow and mellow as quinces are deposited in one corner, and the young rogues have smelt the treasure out.

"Now to answer your kind inquiries. May — to begin at home! — May — many thanks for your recollection of my favourite!—May is as well as can be expected. She is literally and figuratively in the straw, being confined with one puppy — only one; and presenting in her fair person a very complete illustration of the old proverb respecting a hen with one chick. Never was such a fuss made about a little animal since greyhounds were greyhounds, and the tiny creature is as pert, petulant, and precocious a personage as any spoilt child that ever walked on four legs or two. I must confess, in vindication of May's taste, who never before showed such absolute devotion to her offspring, that the puppy has beauty enough for a whole litter. It is a fawn-coloured with a dash of white, and promises to be ticked. Are you sportswoman sufficient to know that *ticked* means covered all over with white spots about the size of a pea? a great addition to greyhound beauty, and a sure sign of greyhound blood; a mark of caste, as they say in your country, and one the more to be relied on since it is a distinction of nature, and not of man.

"The shoemaker's pretty daughter is also 'as well as can be expected.' She is out of doors to-day for the first day since her confinement, and the delicate doll-like baby, which she is tossing as lightly and gracefully as if it were indeed a doll, and showing so proudly to her father's old crony, George Bridgwater, is her own. Her marriage confounded the calculations of all her neighbours, myself included: for she did not marry her handsome admirer Jem Tanner, who has wisely comforted himself by choosing another flame,—nothing so sure a remedy for one love as rushing straight into another; nor Daniel Tubb, the dashing horse-dealer, who used to flourish his gay steed up the street and down the street, "all for the love of pretty Bessie;' neither did she marry Joseph Bacon, the snug young grocer, who walked every Sunday seven miles to sit next her at chapel, and sing hymns from the same book; nor her father's smart apprentice, William Ford, although a present partnership in the business, and a future succession would have made that match quite a *mariage de convenance*:—none of these, her known and recognized lovers, did the fair nymph of the shoe-shop marry, nor any of her thousand and one imputed swains. The happy man was one who had never been seen to speak to her in his life,—John Ford, brother to William, a tall, sinewy, comely blacksmith, who on six days of the week contrives so to become the anvil with his dingy leather cap, and his stiff leather apron, his brawny naked arms and smoky face, that he seems native to the element, a very Vulcan; whilst on the seventh, he emerges like a butterfly from the chrysalis, and by dint of fine clothes and fair water, becomes quite the beau of the village, almost as handsome as Joel himself. Since he has been married to his pretty wife, every body remembers what a bright pattern of fraternal friendship John Ford used to be thought — how attentive to William! how constant in his visits! When William had a cold, the winter before the wedding, John used to come and ask after him every night. O that love! that love! What fibs it makes honest people tell!

"Lucy is gone — gone to superintend the samplers and spelling-books two counties off. Our blooming gipsy, Fanny, has also taken her departure. Her husband found that the gipsy blood could not be got over, especially as his pretty bride, besides her triple sins of gipsyism, of prettiness, and of being his bride, had the misfortune to catch, with a quickness which seemed intuitive, ways and manners suited to her new station, to behave as well as any of her neighbours, and better than most of them — an affront which the worthiest of her society found unpardonable. So Thomas is gone to hold the same office at my Lord's estate in Devonshire; where if they have the wit to keep their own counsels, the mésalliance will never be suspected, and Fanny will pass for a gamekeeper's wife of the very first fashion.

"Lizzy! Alas! alas! you ask for Lizzy! — do you remember how surely at the closed gate of the flower court, or through the open door of her father's neat dwelling, we used to see the smiling rosy face, so full of life and glee; the square sturdy form, strong and active as a boy; the clear bright eyes, and red lips and shining curly hair, giving such an assurance of health and strength? And do you not recollect how the bounding foot, and the gay young voice, and the merry musical laugh seemed to fill the house and the court with her own quick and joyous spirit, as she darted about in her innocent play or her small housewifery, so lively and so vigorous, so lovely and so beloved? Do you not remember, too, how when we stopped to speak to her at that ever-open door, the whole ample kitchen was strewed with her little property, so that you used to liken it to a great baby-house? Here her kitten, there her doll; on one chair an old copy-book, on another a new sash; her work and needle-book and scissors and thimble put neatly away on her own little table; her straw hat ornamented with a tuft of feathery grasses, or a garland of woodbine,

hanging carelessly against the wall; and pots of flowers of all sorts of the garden and the field, from the earliest bud to the latest blossom, ranged in the window, on the dresser, on the mantel shelf, wherever a jug could find room. Every thing spoke of Lizzy, her mother's comfort, her father's delight, the charm and life of the house; and every body loved to hear and see so fair a specimen of healthful and happy childhood. It did one's heart good to pass that open door. But the door is closed now, always closed; and the father, a hale and comely man, of middle age, is become all at once old and bent and broken; and the smiling placid mother looks as if she would never smile again. Nothing has been displaced in that sad and silent dwelling. The straw hat, with its faded garland, still hangs against the wall; the work is folded on the little table, with the small thimble upon it, as if just laid down; jars of withered flowers crowd the mantel and the window;—but the light hath departed; the living flower is gone; poor Lizzy is dead! Are you not sorry for poor, poor Lizzy?

"But this is too mournful a subject:—we must talk now of the Loddon, the beautiful Loddon—yes, it still flows; ay, and still overflows, according to its naughty custom. Only last winter it filled our meadows like a lake; rushed over our mill-dams like a cataract, and played such pranks with the old arch at Yorkpool, that people were fain to boat it betwixt here and Aberleigh; and the bridge having been denounced as dangerous in summer and impassable in winter, is like to cause a dispute between those two grand abstractions, the parish and the county, each of which wishes to turn the cost of rebuilding on the other. By their own account, they are two of the poorest personages in his majesty's dominions; full of debt and difficulty, and exceedingly likely to go to law on the case, by way of amending their condition. The pretty naughty river! There it flows bright and clear as when we walked by its banks to the old house at Aberleigh, looking as innocent and unconscious as if its victim, the bridge, had not been indicted—No—that's not the word! —*presented* at the Quarter Sessions; as if a worshipful committee were not sitting to inquire into its malversations; and an ancient and well-reputed parish and a respectable midland county going together by the ears in consequence of its delinquency. There it flows clear and bright through the beautiful grounds of Aberleigh! The ruined mansion has been entirely pulled down; but the lime-trees remain, and the magnificent poplars and the gay wilderness of shrub and flower. The fishing-house has been repaired by the delicate hand of taste, and it is a fairy scene still; a scene worthy of its owners and its neighbours, wanting nothing in my eyes but you to come and look at it.

"Come very soon, my dear Emily! Tell Colonel L., with our kindest remembrances, that we shall never love him quite so well as he deserves, until he brings you back to us. Come very soon! and in the mean while be sure you send me a full account of yourself and your 'whereabouts,' and do not fail to repay my brief notices of the simple scenery and humble denizens of our village, by gorgeous stories of oriental wonders,—of the Ganges, the palmettos, the elephants, and the Hindoos.

"And now, my dear friend, farewell!

"Ever most affectionately yours,"

&c. &c. &c.

GRACE NEVILLE.

Two or three winters ago, our little village had the good fortune to have its curiosity excited by the sudden appearance of a lovely and elegant young woman, as an inmate in the house of Mr. Martin, a respectable farmer in the place. The pleasure of talking over a new-comer in a country village, which, much as I love country villages, does, I confess, occasionally labour under a stagnation of topics, must not be lightly estimated. In the present instance the enjoyment was greatly increased by the opportune moment at which it occurred, just before Christmas, so that conjecture was happily afloat in all the parties of that merry time, enlivened the tea-table, and gave zest and animation to the supper. There was, too, a slight shade of mystery, a difficulty in coming at the truth, which made the subject unusually poignant. Talk her over as they might, nobody knew any thing certain of the incognita, or her story; nobody could tell who she was, or whence she came. Mrs. Martin, to whom her neighbours were, on a sudden, most politely attentive in the way of calls and invitations, said nothing more than that Miss Neville was a young lady who had come to lodge at Kinlay-end; and, except at church, Miss Neville was invisible. Nobody could tell what to make of her.

Her beauty was, however, no questionable matter. All the parish agreed on that point. She was in deep mourning, which set off advantageously a tall and full, yet easy and elastic figure, in whose carriage the vigour and firmness of youth and health seemed blended with the elegance of education and good company. Youth and health were the principal characteristics of her countenance. There was health in her bright hazel eyes, with their rich dark eye-lashes; health in the profusion of her glossy brown hair; health in her pure and brilliant complexion; health in her red lips, her white teeth, and the beautiful smile that displayed them; health in her very

dimple. Her manners, as well as they could be judged of in passing to and from church, leading one of the little Martins by the hand, and occasionally talking to him, seemed as graceful as her person, and as open as her countenance. All the village agreed that she was a lovely creature, and all the village wondered who she could be. It was a most animating puzzle.

There was, however, no mystery in the story of Grace Neville. She was the only child of an officer of rank, who fell in an early stage of the Peninsular war: her mother had survived him but a short time, and the little orphan had been reared in great tenderness and luxury by her maternal uncle, a kind, thoughtless, expensive man, speculating and sanguine, who, after exhausting a good fortune in vain attempts to realize a great one, sinking money successively in farming, in cotton-spinning, in paper-making, in a silk-mill, and a mine, found himself one fair morning actually ruined, and died (such things have happened) of a broken heart, leaving poor Grace at three-and-twenty, with the habits and education of an heiress, totally destitute.

The poor girl found, as usual, plenty of comforters and advisers. Some recommended her to sink the little fortune she possessed in right of her father in a school; some to lay it by for old age, and go out as a governess;—some hinted at the possibility of matrimony, advising, that at all events so fine a young woman should try her fortune by visiting about amongst her friends for a year or two, and favoured her with a husband-hunting invitation accordingly. But Grace was too independent and too proud for a governess; too sick of schemes for a school; and the hint matrimonial had effectually prevented her from accepting any, even the most unsuspected, invitation. Besides, she said, and perhaps she thought, that she was weary of the world; so she wrote to Mrs. Martin, once her uncle's housekeeper, now the substantial wife of a substantial farmer, and came down to lodge with her in our secluded village.

Poor Grace, what a change! It was mid-winter; snowy, foggy, sleety, wet. Kinlay-end, an old manor-house dilapidated into its present condition, stood with its windows half closed, a huge vine covering its front, and ivy climbing up the sides to the roof—the very image of chillness and desolation. There was, indeed, one habitable wing, repaired and fitted up as an occasional sporting residence for the landlord; but those apartments were locked; and she lived, like the rest of the family, in the centre of the house, made up of great, low, dark rooms, with oaken panels, of long, rambling passages, of interminable galleries, and broad, gusty staircases, up which you might drive a coach and six.—Such was the prospect within doors; and without, mud! mud! mud! nothing but mud! Then the noises;—wind, in all its varieties, combined with bats, rats, cats, owls, pigs, cows, geese, ducks, turkeys, chickens, and children, in all varieties, also; for besides the regular inhabitants of the farm-yard,—biped and quadruped,—Mrs. Martin had within doors sundry coops of poultry, two pet lambs, and four boys from six years old downward, who were, in some way or other, exercising their voices all day long. Mrs. Martin, too, she whilome so soft-spoken and demure, had now found her scolding tongue, and was, indeed, noted for that accomplishment all over the parish: the maid was saucy, and the farmer smoked.

Poor Grace Neville! what a trial! what a contrast! she tried to draw; tried to sing; tried to read; tried to work; and, above all, tried to be contented. But nothing would do. —The vainest endeavour of all was the last. She was of the social, cheerful temperament, to which sympathy is necessary; and having no one to whom she could say, how pleasant is solitude! began to find solitude the most tiresome thing in the world. Mr. and Mrs. Martin were very good sort of people in their way—scolding and smoking notwithstanding; but their way was so different from hers: and the children, whom she might have found some amusement in spoiling, were so spoilt already as to be utterly unbearable.

The only companionable person about the place was a slipshod urchin, significantly termed "the odd boy;" an extra and supplementary domestic, whose department it is to help all the others, out of doors and in; to do all that they leave undone; and to bear the blame of every thing that goes amiss. The personage in question, Dick Crosby by name, was a parish boy taken from the work-house. He was, as nearly as could be guessed, (for nobody took the trouble to be certain about his age) somewhere bordering on eleven; a long, lean, famished-looking boy, with a pale complexion, sharp thin features, and sunburnt hair. His dress was usually a hat without a crown; a tattered round frock; stockings that scarcely covered his ankles, and shoes that hung on his feet by the middle like clogs, down at heel, and open at toe. Yet, underneath all these rags, and through all his huffings and cuffings from master and mistress, carter and maid, the boy looked, and was, merry and contented; was even a sort of wag in his way; sturdy and independent in his opinions, and constant in his attachments. He had a pet sheep-dog (for amongst his numerous avocations he occasionally acted as under-shepherd) a spectral, ghastly-looking animal, with a huge white head and neck, and a gaunt black body.—Mephistopheles might have put himself into such a shape. He had also a pet donkey, the raggedest brute upon the common, of whom he was part owner, and for whose better maintenance he was some-

times accused of such petty larceny as may be comprised in stealing what no other creature would eat, refuse hay, frosty turnips, decayed cabbage-leaves, and thistles from the hedge.

These two faithful followers had long shared Dick Crosby's affections between them; but from the first day of Miss Neville's appearance, the dog and the donkey found a rival. She happened to speak to him, and her look and voice won his heart at once and for ever. Never had a high-born damsel in the days of chivalry so devoted a page. He was at her command by night or by day; nay, "though she called another, Abra came." He would let nobody else clean her shoes, carry her clogs, or run her errands; was always at hand to open the gates, and chase away the cows when she walked; forced upon her his own hoard of nuts; and scoured the country to get her the wintry nosegays which the mildness of the season permitted, sweet-scented coltsfoot, china-roses, laurustinus, and stocks.

It was not in Grace's nature to receive such proofs of attachment without paying them in kind. Dick would hardly have been her choice for a pet, but being so honestly and artlessly chosen by him, she soon began to return the compliment, and showered upon him marks of her favour and protection; perhaps a little gratified, so mixed are human motives! to find that her patronage was still of consequence at Kinlay-end. — Halfpence and sixpences, apples and gingerbread, flowed into Dick's pocket, and his outward man underwent a thorough transformation. He cast his rags, and for the first time in his life put on an entire new suit of clothes. A proud boy was Dick that day. It is recorded that he passed a whole hour in alternate fits of looking in the glass and shouts of laughter. He laughed till he cried, for sheer happiness.

I have been thus particular in my account of Dick, because, in the first place, he was an old acquaintance of mine, a constant and promising attendant at the cricket-ground — his temperament being so mercurial, that even in his busiest days, when he seemed to bave work enough upon his hands for ten boys, he would still make time for play; in the second, because I owe to him the great obligation of being known to his fair patroness. He had persuaded her, one dry afternoon, to go with him, and let him show her the dear cricket-ground; I happened to be passing the spot; and neither of us could ever exactly remember how he managed the matter, but the boy introduced us. He was an extraordinary master of the ceremonies, to be sure; but the introduction was most effectually performed, and to our mutual surprise and mutual pleasure we found ourselves acquainted. I have always thought it one of the highest compliments ever paid me, that Dick Crosby thought me worthy to be known to Miss Neville.

We were friends in five minutes. I found the promise of her lovely countenance amply redeemed by her character. She was frank, ardent, and spirited, with a cultivated mind, and a sweet temper; not to have loved her would have been impossible; and she, beside the natural pleasure of talking to one who could understand and appreciate her, was delighted to come to a house where the mistress did not scold, or the master smoke; where there were neither pigs, chickens, nor children.

As spring advanced and the reads improved, we saw each other almost every day; the soft skies and mild breezes of April, and the profuse floweriness of hedge-row, wood and field, gave a never-failing charm to our long rural walks. Grace was fond of wild flowers, which her *protegé* Dick was assiduous in procuring. He had even sacrificed the vanity of sticking the first bunch of primroses in his Sunday-hat to the pleasure of offering them to her. They supplied her with an in-door amusement; she drew well, and copied his field nosegays with ease and delicacy. She had obtained, too, the loan of a piano, and talked stoutly of constant and vigorous practice, and of pursuing a steady course of reading. All young ladies, I believe, make such resolutions, and some few may possibly keep them; Miss Neville did not.

However lively and animated whilst her spirits were excited by society, it was evident that, when alone, poor Grace was languid and listless, and given to reverie. She would even fall into long fits of musing in company, start when spoken to, droop her fair head like a snow-drop, and sigh, oh such sighs! so long, so deep, so frequent, so drawn from the very heart! They might, to be sure, have been accounted for by the great and sad change in her situation, and the death of her indulgent uncle; but these griefs seemed worn out. I had heard such sighs before, and could not help imputing them to a different cause.

My suspicions were increased, when I found out accidentally that Dick and his donkey travelled every morning three miles to meet just such another Dick and such another donkey, who acted as letter-carriers to that side of the village. They would have arrived at Kinlay-end by noon in their natural progress, but Grace could not wait; so Dick and the donkey made a short cut across the country to waylay his namesake of the letter-bag, and fetch disappointment four hours sooner. It was quite clear that whatever epistles might arrive, the one so earnestly desired never came. Then she was so suspiciously fond of moonlight, and nightingales, and tender poesy; and in the choice of her music, she would so repeat over and over one favourite duet, and would so blush if the repetition were remarked!—Surely she could not always have sung "*La ci darem*" by herself. Poor Grace Ne-

ville! Love was a worse disease than the solitude of Kinlay-end.

Without pretending to any remarkable absence of curiosity on the one hand, or pleading guilty to the slightest want of interest in my dear young friend on the other, I was chiefly anxious to escape the honour of being her confidante. So sure as you talk of love, you nourish it; and I wanted hers to die away. Time and absence, and cheerful company, and summer amusements, would, I doubted not, effect a cure; I even began to fancy her spirits were improving, when one morning towards the middle of May, she came to me more hurried and agitated than I had ever seen her. The cause, when disclosed, seemed quite inadequate to produce so much emotion. Mrs. Martin had received a letter from her landlord, informing her that he had lent to a friend the apartments fitted up for himself at the farm, and that his friend would arrive on the succeeding day for a week's angling. "Well, my dear Grace, and what then?" "And this friend is Sir John Gower." "But who is Sir John Gower?" She hesitated a little—"What do you know of him?"—"Oh, he is the proudest, sternest, cruelest man! It would kill me to see him; it would break my heart, if my heart is not broken already." And then in an inexpressible gush of bitter grief, the tale of love which I had long suspected, burst forth. She had been engaged to the only son of this proud and wealthy baronet, with the full consent of all parties; and on the discovery of her uncle's ruined circumstances, the marriage had been most harshly broken off by his commands. She had never heard from Mr. Gower since they were separated by his father's authority, but in the warmth and confidence of her own passionate and trustful love, she found an assurance of the continuance of his. Never was affection more ardent or more despairing. No common man could have awakened such tenderness in such a woman. I soothed her all I could; and implored her to give us the pleasure of her company during Sir John's stay: and so it was settled. He was expected the next evening, and she agreed to come to us some time in the forenoon.

The morning, however, wore away without bringing Miss Neville; dinner-time arrived and passed, and still we heard no tidings of her. At last, just as we were about to send to Kinlay-end for intelligence, Dick Crosby arrived on his donkey, with a verbal request that I would go to her there. Of course I complied; and as we proceeded on our way, I walked before, he riding behind, but neither of us much out of our usual pace, thanks to my rapid steps, and the grave funereal march of the donkey, I endeavoured to extract as much information as I could from my attendant, a person whom I generally found as communicative as heart could desire.

On this occasion he was most provokingly taciturn. I saw that there was no great calamity to dread, for the boy's whole face was evidently screwed up to conceal a grin, which, in spite of his efforts, broke out every moment in one or other of his features. He was bursting with glee, which for some unknown cause he did not choose to impart; and seemed to have put his tongue under a similar restraint to that which I have read of in some fairy tale, where an enchanter threatens a loquacious waiting-maid with striking her dumb, if, during a certain interval, she utters more than two words,—yes and no. Dick's vocabulary was equally limited. I asked him if Miss Neville was well? "Yes." If he knew what she wanted? "No." If Sir John Gower was arrived? "Yes." If Miss Neville meant to return with me? "No." At last, not able to contain himself any longer, he burst into a shout something between laughing and singing, and forcing the astonished donkey into a pace, which, in that sober beast, might pass for a gallop, rode on before me, followed by the barking sheep-dog, to open the gate; whilst I, not a little curious, walked straight through the house to Miss Neville's sitting-room. I paused a moment at the door, as by some strange counteraction of feeling one often does pause, when strongly interested; and in that moment I caught the sweet notes of *La ci darem*, sung by a superb manly voice, and accompanied by Grace's piano;—and instantly the truth flashed upon me, that the old Sir John Gower was gathered to his fathers, and that this was the heir and the lover come to woo and to wed. No wonder that Grace forgot her dinner engagement! No wonder that Dick Crosby grinned!

I was not mistaken. As soon as decorum would allow, Sir John carried off his beautiful bride, attended by her faithful adherent, the proudest and happiest of all odd boys! and the wedding was splendid enough to give a fresh impulse to village curiosity, and a new and lasting theme to our village gossips, who first and last could never comprehend Grace Neville.

A NEW MARRIED COUPLE.

There is no pleasanter country sound than that of a peal of village bells, as they come vibrating through the air, giving token of marriage and merriment; nor ever was that pleasant sound more welcome than on this still foggy gloomy November morning, when all nature stood as if at pause; the large drops hanging on the thatch without falling; the sere leaves dangling on the trees; the birds mute and motionless on the boughs; turkeys, children, geese, and pigs unnaturally silent;

the whole world quiet and melancholy as some of the enchanted places in the Arabian tales. That merry peal seemed at once to break the spell, and to awaken sound, and life, and motion. It had a peculiar welcome too, as stirring up one of the most active passions in woman or in man, and rousing the rational part of creation from the torpor induced by the season and the weather at the thrilling touch of curiosity. Never was a completer puzzle. Nobody in our village had heard that a wedding was expected; no unaccustomed conveyance, from a coach to a wheelbarrow, had been observed passing up the vicarage lane; no banns had been published in church — no marriage of gentility, that is to say, of license, talked of, or thought of; none of our village beaux had been seen, as village beaux are apt to be on such occasions, smirking and fidgety; none of our village belles ashamed and shy. It was the prettiest puzzle that had occurred since Grace Neville's time; and, regardless of the weather, half the gossips of the street — in other words, half the inhabitants — gathered together in knots and clusters, to discuss flirtations and calculate possibilities.

Still the bells rang merrily on, and still the pleasant game of guessing continued until the appearance of a well-known but most unsuspected equipage, descending the hill from the church, and showing dimly through the fog the most unequivocal signs of bridal finery, supplied exactly the solution which all riddles ought to have, adding a grand climax of amazement to the previous suspense—the new married couple being precisely the two most unlikely persons to commit matrimony in the whole neighbourhood; the only two whose names had never come in question during the discussion, both bride and bridegroom having been long considered the most confirmed and resolute old maid and old bachelor to be found in the country side.

Master Jacob Frost is an itinerant chapman, somewhere on the wrong side of sixty, who traverses the counties of Hants, Berks, and Oxon, with a noisy lumbering cart full of panniers, containing the heterogeneous commodities of fruit and fish, driving during the summer a regular and profitable barter between the coast on one side of us and the cherry country on the other. We who live about midway between these two extreme points of his peregrination, have the benefit of both kinds of merchandise both going and coming; and there is not a man, woman, or child in the parish, who does not know Master Frost's heavy cart and old grey mare half a mile off, as well as the stentorian cry of "Cherries, crabs, and salmon," sometimes pickled, and sometimes fresh, with which he makes the common and village re-echo; for, with an indefatigable perseverance, he cries his goods along the whole line of road, picking up customers where a man of less experience would despair, and so used to utter those sounds while marching beside his rumbling equipage, that it would not be at all surprising if he were to cry "Cherries — salmon! salmon — cherries!" in his sleep. As to fatigue, that is entirely out of the question. Jacob is a man of iron; a tall, lean, gaunt figure, all bone and sinew, constantly clad in a tight brown jacket with breeches to match, long leather gaiters, and a leather cap; his face and hair tanned by constant exposure to the weather into a tint so nearly resembling his vestments, that he looks all of a colour, like the statue ghost in Don Giovanni, although the hue be different from that renowned spectre—Jacob being a brown man. Perhaps Master Peter in Don Quixote, him of the ape and the shamoy doublet, were the apter comparison; or, with all reverence be it spoken, the ape himself. His visage is spare, and lean, and saturnine, enlivened by a slight cast in the dexter eye, and diversified by a partial loss of his teeth, all those on the left hand having been knocked out by a cricket ball, which, aided by the before-mentioned obliquity of vision, gives a peculiar one-sided expression to his physiognomy.

His tongue is well hung and oily, as suits his vocation. No better man at a bargain than Master Frost: he would persuade you that brill was turbot, and that black cherries were maydukes; and yet, to be an itinerant vender of fish, the rogue hath a conscience. Try to bate him down, and he cheats you without scruple or mercy; but put him on his honour, and he shall deal as fairly with you as the honestest man in Billingsgate. Neither doth he ever impose on children, with whom, in the matter of shrimps, perriwinkles, nuts, apples, and such boyish ware, he hath frequent traffic. He is liberal to the urchins; and I have sometimes been amused to see the Wat Tyler and Robin Hood kind of spirit with which he will fling to some wistful penniless brat, the identical handful of cherries which, at the risk of his character and his customer, he hath cribbed from the scales, when weighing out a long-contested bargain with some clamorous housewife.

Also he is an approved judge and devoted lover of country sports; attends all pony races, donkey races, wrestling and cricket-matches, an amateur and arbiter of the very first water. At every revel or Maying within six miles of his beat, may Master Frost be seen, pretending to the world, and doubtless to his own conscience (for of all lies those that one tells to that stern monitor are the most frequent), that he is only there in the way of business; whilst in reality the cart and the old white mare, who perfectly understands the affair, may generally be found in happy quietude under some shady hedge;—whilst a black sheep-dog, his constant and

trusty follower, keeps guard over the panniers, Master Frost himself being seated in full state amidst the thickest of the throng, gravest of umpires, most impartial and learned of referees, utterly oblivious of cart and horse, panniers and sheep-dog. The veriest old woman that ever stood before a stall, or carried a fruit-basket, would beat our shrewd merchant out of the field on such a day as that; he hath not even time to bestow a dole on his usual pensioners, the children. Unprofitable days to him, of a surety, so far as blameless pleasure can be called unprofitable; but it is worth something to a spectator to behold him in his glory, to see the earnest gravity, the solemn importance with which he will ponder the rival claims of two runners tied in sacks, or two grinners through a horse-collar.

Such were the habits, the business, and the amusements of our old acquaintance, Master Frost. Home he had none, nor family, save the old sheep-dog, and the old grey horse, who lived, like himself, on the road; for it was his frequent boast, that he never entered a house, but ate, drank, and slept in the cart, his only dwelling-place. Who would ever have dreamt of Jacob's marrying! And yet he it is that has just driven down the vicarage-lane, seated in, not walking beside, that rumbling conveyance, the mare and the sheep-dog decked in white satin favours, already somewhat soiled, and wondering at their own finery; himself adorned in a new suit of brown, exactly of the old cut, adding by a smirk and a wink to the usual knowingness of his squinting visage. There he goes, a happy bridegroom, perceiving and enjoying the wonder that he has caused, and chuckling over it in low whispers to his fair bride, whose marriage seems to the puzzled villagers more astonishing still.

In one corner of an irregular and solitary green, communicating by intricate and seldom-trodden lanes with a long chain of commons, stands a thatched and white-washed cottage, whose little dove-cot windows, high chimneys, and honeysuckled porch, stand out picturesquely from a richly-wooded back-ground; whilst a magnificent yew-tree, and a clear bright pond on one side of the house, and a clump of horse-chestnuts overhanging some low weather-stained buildings on the other, form altogether an assemblage of objects that would tempt the pencil of a landscape painter, if ever painter could penetrate to a nook so utterly obscure. There is no road across the green, but a well-trodden footpath leads to the door of the dwelling, which the sign of a bell suspended from the yew-tree, and a board over the door announcing "Hester Hewit's Home-brewed Beer," denote to be a small public house.

Every body is surprised to see even the humblest village hostel in such a situation; but the Bell is in reality a house of great resort, not only on account of Hester's home-brewed, which is said to be the best ale in the county, but because, in point of fact, that apparently lonely and trackless common is the very high road of the drovers who come from different points of the west to the great mart, London. Seldom would that green be found without a flock of Welsh sheep, foot-sore and weary, and yet tempted into grazing by the short fine grass dispersed over its surface, or a drove of gaunt Irish pigs sleeping in a corner, or a score of Devonshire cows straggling in all directions, picking the long grass from the surrounding ditches; whilst dog and man, shepherd and drover, might be seen basking in the sun before the porch, or stretched on the settles by the fire, according to the weather and the season.

The damsel who, assisted by an old Chelsea pensioner, minus a leg, and followed by a little stunted red-haired parish girl and a huge tabby cat, presided over this flourishing hostelry, was a spinster of some fifty years standing, with a reputation as upright as her person; a woman of slow speech and civil demeanour, neat, prim, precise, and orderly, stiff-starched and straight-laced as any maiden gentlewoman within a hundred miles. In her youth she must have been handsome; even now, abstract the exceeding primness, the pursed-up mouth, and the bolt-upright carriage, and Hester is far from uncomely, for her complexion is delicate, and her features are regular. And Hester, besides her comeliness and her good ale, is well to do in the world, has money in the stocks, — some seventy pounds, — a fortune in furniture, feather-beds, mattresses, tables, presses and chairs of shining walnut-tree, to say nothing of a store of homespun linen, and the united wardrobes of three maiden aunts. A wealthy damsel was Hester, and her suitors must probably have exceeded in number and boldness those of any lady in the land. Welsh drovers, Scotch pedlars, shepherds from Salisbury Plain, and pig-drivers from Ireland—all these had she resisted for five-and-thirty years, determined to live and die "in single blessedness," and "leave the world no copy."

And she it is whom Jacob has won, from Scotchman and Irishman, pig-dealer and shepherd, she who now sits at his side in sober finery, a demure and blushing bride! Who would ever have thought of Hester's marrying! and when can the wooing have been? And how will they go on together? Will Master Frost still travel the country, or will he sink quietly into the landlord of the Bell? And was the match for love or for money? And what will become of the lame ostler? And how will Jacob's sheep-dog agree with Hester's cat? These, and a thousand such, are the questions of the village, whilst the bells ring merrily, and the new-married couple wend peaceably home.

OLIVE HATHAWAY.

One of the principal charms of this secluded village consists in the infinite variety of woody lanes, which wind along from farm to farm, and from field to field, intersecting each other with an intricacy so perplexing, and meandering with such a surprising round-about-ness, that one often seems turning one's back directly on the spot to which one is bound. For the most part those rough and narrow ways, devoted merely to agricultural purposes, are altogether unpeopled, although here and there a lone barn forms a characteristic termination to some winding lane, or a solitary habitation adds a fresh interest to the picture.

These lanes, with their rich hedge-rows, their slips of flowery greensward, and their profound feeling of security and retirement, have long been amongst my favourite walks; and Farley-lane is perhaps the prettiest and pleasantest of all, the shadiest in warm weather, and the most sheltered in cold, and appears doubly delightful by the transition from the exposed and open common from which it leads.

It is a deep narrow unfrequented road, by the side of a steep hill, winding between small enclosures of pasture land on one side, and the grounds of the Great House, with their picturesque paling and rich plantations, on the other; the depth and undulations of the wild cart-track giving a singularly romantic and secluded air to the whole scene, whilst occasionally the ivied pollards and shining holly-bushes of the hedge-row, mingle with the laurels, and cedars, and fine old firs of the park, forming, even in mid-winter, a green arch over-head, and contrasting vividly with a little sparkling spring, which runs gurgling along by the side of the pathway. Towards the centre of the lane rises an irregular thatched cottage, with a spacious territory of garden and orchard, to which you ascend, first by a single plank thrown across the tiny rivulet, and then by two or three steps cut in the bank — an earthen staircase. This has been, as long as I can remember, the habitation of Rachel Strong, a laundress of the highest reputation in the hamlet, and of her young niece, Olive Hathaway. It is just possible that my liking for the latter of these personages may have somewhat biassed my opinion of the beauty of Farley-lane.

Olive Hathaway has always appeared to me a very interesting creature. Lame from her earliest childhood, and worse than an orphan,—her mother being dead, and her father, from mental infirmity, incapable of supplying her place,—she seemed prematurely devoted to care and suffering. Always gentle and placid, no one ever remembered to have seen Olive gay. Even that merriest of all hours, the noon-day play-time at school, passed gravely and sadly with the little lame girl. A book, if she could borrow one, if not, knitting or working for her good aunt Rachel, was her only pastime. She had no troop of play-fellows, no chosen companion,—joined in none of the innocent cabal or mischievous mirth of her comrades; and yet every one liked Olive, even although cited by her mistress as a pattern of sempstresship and good conduct—even although held up as that odious thing, a model,—no one could help loving poor Olive, so entirely did her sweetness and humility disarm envy and mollify scorn.

On leaving school she brought home the same good qualities, and found them attended by the same results. To Rachel Strong her assistance soon became invaluable. There was not such an ironer in the country. One could swear to the touch of her skilful fingers, whether in disentangling the delicate complexity of a point-lace cap, or in bringing out the bolder beauties of a cut-work collar; one could swear to her handywork, just as safely as a bank clerk may do to the calligraphy of a monied man on 'Change, or an amateur in art to the handling of a great master. There was no mistaking her touch. Things ironed by her looked as good as new, some said better; and her aunt's trade throve apace.

But Olive had a trade of her own. Besides her accomplishments as a laundress, she was an incomparable needle-woman; could construct a shirt between sunrise and sunset; had a genuine genius for mantua-making; a real taste for millinery; and was employed in half the houses round as a sempstress, at the rate of eight-pence a day, — devoting by far the greater part of her small earnings to the comforts of her father, a settled inhabitant of the village workhouse. A harmless and a willing creature was poor William Hathaway; ay, and a useful one in his little way. For my part, I cannot think what they would have done without him at the workhouse, where he filled the several departments of man and maid of all-work, digging the garden, dressing the dinner, running on errands, and making the beds. Still less can I imagine how the boys could have dispensed with him; the ten-year-old urchins, with whom he played at cricket every evening, and where the kind and simple old man, with his tall, lean person, his pale, withered face, and grizzled beard, was the fag and favourite of the party, the noisiest and merriest of the crew. A useful and a happy man was poor William Hathaway, albeit the proud and the worldly-wise held him in scorn; happiest of all on the Sunday afternoons, when he came to dine with his daughter and her good aunt Rachel, and receive the pious dole, the hoarded half-pence or the "splendid shilling," which it was her delight to accumulate for his little pleasures, and which he, child-like in all his

ways, spent like a child on cakes and gingerbread.

There was no fear of the source failing: for gentle, placid, grateful and humble, considerate beyond her years, and skilful far beyond her opportunities, every one liked to employ Olive Hathaway. The very sound of her crutch in the court, and her modest tap at the door, inspired a kindly, almost a tender feeling for the afflicted and defenceless young creature, whom patience and industry were floating so gently down the rough stream of life. Her person, when seated, was far from unpleasant, though shrunken and thin from delicacy of habit, and slightly leaning to one side from the constant use of the crutch. Her face was interesting from feature and expression, in spite of the dark and perfectly colourless complexion, which gave her the appearance of being much older than she really was. Her eyes, especially, were full of sweetness and power; and her long straight hair, parted on the forehead and twisted into a thick knot behind, gave a statue-like grace to her head, that accorded ill with the coarse straw bonnet, and brown stuff gown, of which her dress was usually composed. There was, in truth, a something elegant and refined in her countenance; and the taste that she displayed, even in the homeliest branches of her own homely art, fully sustained the impression produced by her appearance. If any of our pretty damsels wanted a pretty gown, she had only to say to Olive, "Make it according to your own fancy;" and she was sure to be arrayed, not only in the very best fashion, (for our little mantua-maker had an instinct which led her at once to the right model, and could distinguish at a glance between the elegance of a countess and the finery of her maid,) but with the nicest attention to the becoming in colour and in form.

Her taste was equally just in all things. She would select, in a moment, the most beautiful flower in a garden, and the finest picture in a room: and going about, as she did, all over the village, hearing new songs and new stories from the young, and old tales and old ballads from the aged, it was remarkable that Olive, whose memory was singularly tenacious for what she liked, retained only the pretty lines or the striking incidents. For the bad or the indifferent she literally had no memory: they passed by her "as the idle wind that she regarded not." Her fondness for poetry, and the justness of taste which she displayed in it, exposed poor Olive to one serious inconvenience; she was challenged as being a poetess herself; and although she denied the accusation earnestly, blushingly, even tearfully, and her accusers could bring neither living witness nor written document to support their assertion, yet so difficult is it to disprove that particular calumny, that in spite of her reiterated denial, the charge passes for true to this very hour. Habit, however, reconciles all things. People may become accustomed even to that sad nickname an authoress. In process of time the imputed culprit ceased to be shocked at the sound, seemed to have made up her mind to bear the accusation, and even to find some amusement in its truth or its falsity. There was an arch and humorous consciousness in her eyes, on such occasions, that might be construed either way, and left it an even wager whether our little lame girl were a poetess or not.

Such was, and such is Olive Hathaway, the humble and gentle village mantua-maker; and such she is likely to continue: for too refined for the youths of her own station, and too unpretty to attract those above her, it is very clear to me that my friend Olive will be an old maid. There are certain indications of character, too, which point to that as her destiny; a particularity respecting her tools of office, which renders the misplacing a needle, the loss of a pin, or the unwinding half an inch of cotton, an evil of no small magnitude; a fidgety exactness as to plaits and gathers; a counting of threads and comparing of patterns, which our notable housewives, who must complain of something, grumble at as waste of time; a horror of shreds and litter, which distinguishes her from all other mantua-makers that ever sewed a seam; and, lastly, a love of animals, which has procured for her the friendship and acquaintance of every four-footed creature in the neighbourhood. This is the most suspicious symptom of all. Not only is she followed and idolized by the poor old cur which Rachel Strong keeps to guard her house, and the still more aged donkey that carries home her linen, but every cat, dog, or bird, every variety of domestic pet that she finds in the different houses where she works, immediately following the strange instinct by which animals, as well as children, discover who likes them, makes up to, and courts Olive Hathaway. For her doth farmer Brookes's mastiff — surliest of watch-dogs! — pretermit his incessant bark; for her, and for her only, will dame Wheeler's tabby cease to spit and erect her bristles, and become, as nearly as a spiteful cat can become so, gentle and amiable; even the magpie at the Rose, most accomplished and most capricious of all talking birds, will say, "Very well, ma'am," in answer to Olive's "How d'ye do?" and whistle an accompaniment to her "God save the King," after having persevered in a dumb resentment for a whole afternoon. There 's a magic about her placid smile and her sweet low voice: no sulkiness of bird or beast can resist their influence.

And Olive hath abundance of pets in return, from my greyhound Mayflower, downward; and indeed takes the whole animal world under her protection, whether pets or no; begs off condemned kittens, nurses sick ducklings, will give her last penny to prevent an unlucky

urchin from taking a bird's nest; and is cheated and laughed at for her tender-heartedness, as is the way of the world in such cases.

Yes, Olive will certainly be an old maid, and a happy one,—content and humble, and cheerful and beloved! What can woman desire more?

A CHRISTMAS PARTY.

The wedding of Jacob Frost and Hester Hewit took place on a Monday morning; and, on the next day (Tuesday), as I was walking along the common—blown along, would be the properer phrase, for it was a wind that impelled one onward like a steam-engine—what should I see but the well-known fish-cart sailing in the teeth of that raging gale, and Jacob and his old companions, the grey mare and the black sheep-dog, breasting, as well as they might, the fury of the tempest. As we neared, I caught occasional sounds of "herrings — oysters! — oysters — herrings!" although the words, being as it were blown away, came scatteringly and feebly on the ear; and when we at last met, and he began in his old way to recommend, as was his wont, these oysters of a week old (note, that the rogue was journeying coast-wise, outward bound), with a profusion of praises and asseverations which he never vented on them when fresh,—and when I also perceived that Jacob had donned his old garments, and that his company had doffed their bridal favours,—it became clear that our man of oysters did not intend to retire yet awhile to the landlordship of the Bell; and it was soon equally certain that the fair bride, thus deserted in the very outset of the honey-moon, intended to maintain a full and undisputed dominion over her own territories—she herself, and her whole establishment—the lame ostler, who still called her Mistress Hester—the red-haired charity-girl, and the tabby cat, still remaining in full activity; whilst the very inscription of her maiden days, "Hester Hewit's home-brewed," still continued to figure above the door of that respectable hostelry. Two days after the wedding, that happy event seemed to be most comfortably forgotten by all the parties concerned—the only persons who took any note of the affair being precisely those who had nothing to do with the matter; that is to say, all the gossips of the neighbourhood, male and female—who did, it must be confessed, lift up their hands, and shake their heads, and bless themselves, and wonder what this world would come to.

On the succeeding Saturday, however, his regular day, Jacob re-appeared on the road, and, after a pretty long traffic in the village, took his way to the Bell; and, the next morning, the whole *cortége*, bride and bride-groom, lame ostler, red-haired lass, grey mare, and black sheep-dog, adorned exactly as on the preceding Monday, made their appearance at church; Jacob looking, as aforetime, very knowing — Hester, as usual, very demure. After the service there was a grand assemblage of Master Frost's acquaintances; for, between his customers and his playmates, Jacob was on intimate terms with half the parish—and many jokes were prepared on his smuggled marriage and subsequent desertion; but he of the brown jerkin evaded them all, by handing his fair lady into the cart, lifting the poor parish girl beside her, and even lending a friendly hoist to the lame ostler; after which he drove off, with a knowing nod, in total silence; being thereunto prompted partly by his wife's entreaties, partly by a sound more powerful over his associations—an impatient neigh from the old grey mare, who never having attended church before, had begun to weary of the length of the service, and to wonder on what new course of duty she and her master were entering.

By this dispatch, our new-married couple certainly contrived to evade the main broadside of jokes prepared for their reception; but a few random jests, flung after them at a venture, hit notwithstanding; and one amongst them, containing an insinuation that Jacob had stolen a match to avoid keeping the wedding, touched our bridegroom, a man of mettle in his way, on the very point of honour — the more especially as it proceeded from a bluff old bachelor of his own standing — honest George Bridgwater, of the Lea — at whose hospitable gate he had discussed many a jug of ale and knoll of bacon, whilst hearing and telling the news of the country side. George Bridgwater to suspect him of stinginess!—the thought was insupportable. Before he reached the Bell he had formed, and communicated to Hester, the spirited resolution of giving a splendid party in the Christmas week—a sort of wedding-feast or house-warming; consisting of smoking and cards for the old, dancing and singing for the young, and eating and drinking for all ages; and, in spite of Hester's decided disapprobation, invitations were given and preparations entered on forthwith.

Sooth to say, such are the sad contradictions of poor human nature, that Mrs. Frost's displeasure, albeit a bride in the honey-moon, not only entirely failed in persuading Master Frost to change his plan, but even seemed to render him more confirmed and resolute in his purpose. Hester was a thrifty housewife; and although Jacob was apparently, after his fashion, a very gallant and affectionate husband, and although her interest had now become his—and of his own interest none had ever suspected him to be careless—yet he did certainly take a certain sly pleasure in making an attack

at once on her hoards and her habits, and forcing her into a gaiety and an outlay, which made the poor bride start back aghast.

The full extent of Hester's misfortune in this ball, did not, however, come upon her at once. She had been accustomed to the speculating hospitality of the Christmas parties at the Rose, whose host was wont at tide-times to give a supper to his customers, that is to say, to furnish the eatables thereof—the leg of mutton and turnips, the fat goose and the apple-sauce, and the huge plum-puddings—of which light viands that meal usually consisted, on an understanding that the aforesaid customers were to pay for the drinkables therewith consumed; and, from the length of the sittings, as well as the reports current on such occasions, Hester was pretty well assured that the expenditure had been most judicious, and that the leg of mutton and trimmings had been paid for over and over. She herself being, as she expressed it, "a lone woman, and apt to be put upon," had never gone farther in these matters than a cup of hyson and muffins, and a glass of hot elder-wine, to some of her cronies in the neighbourhood; but, having considerable confidence both in the extent of Jacob's connexions and their tippling propensities, as well as in that faculty of getting tipsy and making tipsy in Jacob himself, which she regarded "with one auspicious and one dropping eye," as good and bad for her trade, she had at first no very great objection to try for once the experiment of a Christmas party; nor was she so much startled at the idea of a dance — dancing, as she observed, being a mighty provoker of thirst; neither did she very greatly object to her husband's engaging old Timothy, the fiddler, to officiate for the evening, on condition of giving him as much ale as he chose to drink, although she perfectly well knew what that promise implied; Timothy's example being valuable on such an occasion. But when the dreadful truth stared her in the face, that this entertainment was to be a *bonâ fide* treat—that not only the leg of mutton, the fat goose, and the plum-puddings, but the ale, wine, spirits and tobacco, were to come out of her coffers, then party, dancing, and fiddler became nuisances past endurance, the latter above all.

Old Timothy was a person of some note in our parish, known to every man, woman, and child in the place, of which, indeed, he was a native. He had been a soldier in his youth, and having had the good luck to receive a sabre wound on his skull, had been discharged from the service as infirm of mind, and passed to his parish accordingly; where he had led a wandering pleasant sort of life, sometimes in one public-house, sometimes in another—tolerated, as Hester said, for his bad example, until he ran up a score that became intolerable, at which times he was turned out, with the workhouse to go to, for a *pis aller*, and a comfortable prospect that his good-humour, his good-fellowship and his fiddle, would in process of time be missed and wanted, and that he might return to his old haunts and run up a fresh score. When half tipsy, which happened nearly every day in the week, and at all hours, he would ramble up and down the village, playing snatches of tunes at every corner, and collecting about him a never-failing audience of eight and ten-year-old urchins of either sex, amongst which small mob old Timothy, with his jokes, his songs, and his antics, was incredibly popular. Against justice and constable, treadmill and stocks, the sabre-cut was a protection, although, I must candidly confess, that I do not think the crack in the crown ever made itself visible in his demeanour until a sufficient quantity of ale had gone down his throat, to account for any aberration of conduct, supposing the broad-sword in question never to have approached his skull. That weapon served, however, as a most useful shield to our modern Timotheus, who, when detected in any outrageous fit of drunkenness, would immediately summon sufficient recollection to sigh and look pitiful, and put his poor, shaking, withered hand to the seam which the wound had left, with an air of appeal, which even I, with all my skepticism, felt to be irresistible.

In short, old Timothy was a privileged person; and, terrible sot though he were, he almost deserved to be so, for his good-humour, his contentedness, his constant festivity of temper, and his good-will towards every living thing—a good-will which met with its usual reward in being heartily and universally returned. Every body liked old Timothy, with the solitary exception of the hostess of the Bell, who, having once had him as an inmate during three weeks, had been so scandalized by his disorderly habits, that, after having with some difficulty turned him out of her house, she had never admitted him into it again, having actually resorted to the expedient of buying off her intended customer, even when he presented himself pence in hand, by the gift of a pint of home-brewed at the door, rather than suffer him to effect a lodgment in her tap-room—a mode of dismissal so much to Timothy's taste, that his incursions had become more and more frequent, insomuch that "to get rid of the fiddler and other scapegraces, who were apt to put upon a lone woman," formed a main article in the catalogue of reasons assigned by Hester to herself and the world, for her marriage with Jacob Frost. — Accordingly, the moment she heard that Timothy's irregularities and ill example were likely to prove altogether unprofitable, she revived her old objection to the poor fiddler's morals, rescinded her consent to his admission, and insisted so vehemently on his being unordered, that her astonished husband, fairly out-talked and out-scolded, was fain to pur-

chase a quiet evening by a promise of obedience. Having carried this point, she forthwith, according to the example of all prudent wives, began an attack on another, and, having compassed the unordering of Timothy, began to bargain for uninviting her next neighbour, the widow Glen.

Mrs. Martha Glen kept a baker's and chandler's shop in a wide lane, known by the name of the Broadway, and adorned with a noble avenue of oaks, terminating in the green whereon stood the Bell, which, by dint of two or three cottages peeping out from amongst the trees, and two or three farm-houses, the smoke from whose chimneys sailed curlingly amongst them, might, in comparison with that lonely nook, pass for inhabited. Martha was a buxom widow, of about the same standing with Mistress Frost. She had had her share of this world's changes, being the happy relict of three several spouses; and was now a comely rosy dame, with a laughing eye and a merry tongue. Why Hester should hate Martha Glen was one of the puzzles of the parish.—Hate her she did, with that venomous and deadly hatred that never comes to words; and Martha repaid the obligation in kind, as much as a naturally genial and relenting temper would allow, although certainly the balance of aversion was much in favour of Mrs. Frost. An exceedingly smooth, genteel, and civil hatred it was on both sides; such an one as would have done honour to a more polished society. They dealt with each other, curtsied to each other, sate in the same pew at church, and employed the same charwoman—which last accordance, by the way, may partly account for the long duration of discord between the parties. Betty Clarke, the help in question, being a sharp, shrewish, vixenish woman, with a positive taste for quarrels, who regularly reported every cool innuendo uttered by the slow and soft-spoken Mrs. Frost, and every hot retort elicited from the rash and hasty Martha, and contrived to infuse her own spirit into each. With such an auxiliary on either side, there could be no great wonder at the continuance of this animosity; how it began was still undecided. There were, indeed, rumours of an early rivalry between the fair dames for the heart of a certain gay shepherd, the first husband of Martha; other reports assigned as a reason the unlucky tricks of Tom Higgs, the only son of Mrs. Glen by her penultimate spouse, and the greatest pickle within twenty miles; a third party had, since the marriage, discovered the jealousy of Jacob to be the proximate cause, Martha Glen having been long his constant customer, dealing with him in all sorts of fishery and fruitery for herself and her shop, from red herrings to golden pippins;—whilst a fourth party, still more scandalous, placed the jealousy, to which they also attributed the aversion, to the score of a young and strapping Scotch pedlar, Sandy Frazer by name, who travelled the country with muslins and cottons, and for whom certain malicious gossips asserted both ladies to entertain a lurking *penchant*, and whose insensibility towards the maiden was said to have been the real origin of her match with Jacob Frost, whose proffer she had accepted out of spite. For my own part, I disbelieve all and each of these stories, and hold it very hard that an innocent woman cannot entertain a little harmless aversion towards her next neighbour without being called to account for so natural a feeling. It seems that Jacob thought so too—for on Hester's conditioning that Mrs. Glen should be excluded from the party, he just gave himself a wink and a nod, twisted his mouth a little more on one side than usual, and assented without a word; and with the same facility did he relinquish the bough of misletoe which he had purposed to suspend from the bacon-rack—the ancient misletoe bough, on passing under which our village lads are apt to snatch a kiss from the village maidens; a ceremony which offended Hester's nicety, and which Jacob promised to abrogate; and, pacified by these concessions, the bride promised to make due preparation for the ball, whilst the bridegroom departed on his usual expedition to the coast.

Of the unrest of that week of bustling preparation, words can give but a faint image—Oh, the scourings, the cleanings, the sandings, the dustings, the scoldings of that disastrous week! The lame ostler and the red-haired parish girl were worked off their feet—"even Sunday shone no Sabbath-day to them"—for then did the lame ostler trudge eight miles to the church of a neighbouring parish, to procure the attendance of a celebrated bassoon-player to officiate in lieu of Timothy; whilst the poor little maid was sent nearly as far to the next town, in quest of an itinerant show-woman, of whom report had spoken at the Bell, to beat the tambourine. The show-woman proved undiscoverable; but the bassoon-player having promised to come, and to bring with him a clarionet, Mrs. Frost was at ease as to her music; and having provided more victuals than the whole village could have discussed at a sitting, and having moreover adorned her house with berried holly, china roses and chrysanthemums after the most tasteful manner, began to enter into the spirit of the thing, and to wish for the return of her husband, to admire and to praise.

Late on the great day Jacob arrived, his cart laden with marine stores for his share of the festival. Never had our goodly village witnessed such a display of oysters, mussels, perriwinkles and cockles, to say nothing of apples and nuts, and two little kegs, snugly covered up, which looked exceedingly as if they had cheated the revenue, a packet of green tea, which had something of the same air, and a new silk gown, of a flaming salmon-

colour, straight from Paris, which he insisted on Hester's retiring to assume, whilst he remained to arrange the table and receive the company, who, it being now about four o'clock, P. M.—our good rustics can never have enough of a good thing—were beginning to assemble for the ball.

The afternoon was fair and cold, and dry and frosty;—and Matthews's, Bridgwater, Whites, and Jones's, in short the whole farmerage and shop-keepery of the place, with a goodly proportion of wives and daughters, came pouring in apace. Jacob received them with much gallantry, uncloaking and unbonneting the ladies, assisted by his two staring and awkward auxiliaries, welcoming their husbands and fathers, and apologising, as he best might, for the absence of his helpmate; who, "perplexed in the extreme" by her new finery, which happening to button down the back, she was fain to put on hind side before, did not make her appearance till the greater part of the company had arrived, and the music had struck up a country dance. An evil moment, alas! did poor Hester choose for her entry! for the first sound that met her ear was Timothy's fiddle, forming a strange trio with the bassoon and the clarionet: and the first persons whom she saw were Tom Higgs cracking walnuts at the chimney-side, and Sandy Frazer saluting the widow Glen under the misletoe. How she survived such sights and sounds does appear wonderful—but survive them she did—for at three o'clock, A. M., when our reporter left the party, she was engaged in a sociable game at cards, which, by the description, seems to have been long whist, with the identical widow Glen, Sandy Frazer and William Ford, and had actually won fivepence-halfpenny of Martha's money; the young folks were still dancing gaily, to the sound of Timothy's fiddle, which fiddle had the good quality of going on almost as well drunk as sober, and it was now playing solo, the clarionet being *hors-de-combat* and the bassoon under the table. Tom Higgs, after showing off more tricks than a monkey, amongst the rest sewing the whole card-party together by the skirts, to the probable damage of Mrs. Frost's gay gown, had returned to his old post by the fire, and his old amusement of cracking walnuts, with the shells of which he was pelting the little parish girl, who sate fast asleep on the other side; and Jacob Frost in all his glory, sate in a cloud of tobacco smoke, roaring out catches with his old friend George Bridgwater, and half a dozen other "drowthy cronies," whilst "aye the ale was growing better," and the Christmas party went merrily on.

A QUIET GENTLEWOMAN.

My present reminiscence will hardly be of the tenderest sort, since I am about to commemorate one of the oldest bores of my acquaintance, one of the few grievances of my happy youth. The person in question, my worthy friend Mrs. Aubrey, was a respectable widow lady, whose daughter having married a relation of my father's, just at the time that she herself came to settle in the town near which we resided, constituted exactly that mixture of juxtaposition and family connexion, which must of necessity lead to a certain degree of intimacy, whatever discrepancies might exist in the habits and characters of the parties. We were intimate accordingly; dined with her once a year, drank tea with her occasionally, and called on her every time that the carriage went into W—; visits which she returned in the lump, by a sojourn of at least a month every summer with us at the Lodge. How my dear mother endured this last infliction, I cannot imagine: I most undutifully contrived to evade it, by so timing an annual visit, which I was accustomed to pay, as to leave home on the day before her arrival, and return to it the day after her departure, quite content with the share of *ennui* which the morning calls and the tea-drinkings (evils which generally fell to my lot) entailed upon me.

This grievance was the more grievous, inasmuch as it was one of those calamities which do not admit the great solace and consolation to be derived from complaint. Mrs. Aubrey, although the most tiresome person under the sun, without an idea, without a word, a mere inert mass of matter,—was yet in the fullest sense of those "words of fear" a good sort of woman, well-born, well-bred, well-jointured, and well-conducted, a perfectly unexceptionable acquaintance. There were some who even envied me my intimacy with this human automaton, this most extraordinary specimen of still life.

In her youth she had been accounted pretty, a fair sleepy blue-eyed beauty, languid and languishing, and was much followed by that class of admirers, who like a woman the better the nearer she approaches to a picture in demeanour as well as in looks.* She had, however, with the disparity that so often attends upon matrimony, fallen to the lot of a most vivacious and mercurial country squire,

* One of her lovers, not quite so devoted to quietude in the fair sex, adventured on a gentle admonition. He presented to her a superb copy of the "Castle of Indolence," and requested her to read it. A few days after, he inquired of her sister if his fair mistress had condescended to look into the book. "No," was the answer, "No, but I read it to her as she lay on the sofa." The gentleman was a man of sense. He shrugged his shoulders, and six months after married this identical sister.

a thorough-paced foxhunter, whose pranks (some of them more daring than lawful) had obtained for him the cognomen of "mad Aubrey;" and having had the good fortune to lose this husband in the third year of their nuptials, she had never undergone the fatigue and trouble of marrying another.

When I became acquainted with her, she was a sleek round elderly lady, with very small features, very light eyes, invisible eyebrows, and a flaxen wig. She sat all day long on a sofa by the fireside, with her feet canted up on an ottoman; the ingenious machine called a pair of lazy tongs on one side of her, and a small table on the other, provided with every thing that she was likely or unlikely to want for the whole morning. The bell-pull was also within reach: but she had an aversion to ringing the bell, a process which involved the subsequent exertion of speaking to the servant when he appeared. The dumb-waiter was her favourite attendant. There she sat, sofa-ridden; so immovable, that if the fire had been fierce enough to roast her into a fever, as once happened to some exquisitely silly king of Spain, I do think that she would have staid quiet, not from etiquette, but from sheer laziness. She was not however unemployed; your very idle people have generally some play-work, the more tedious and useless the better; hers was knitting with indefatigable perseverance little diamonds in white cotton, destined at some future period to dovetail into a counterpane. The diamonds were striped, and were intended to be sewed together so artistically, that the stripes should intersect each other, one row running perpendicularly and the next horizontally, so as to form a regular pattern; a bit of white mosaic, a tesselated quilt.

At this work I regularly found Mrs. Aubrey when compelled to the "sad civility" of a morning call, in which her unlucky visiter had all the trouble of keeping up the conversation. What a trouble it was! just like playing at battledore by one's self, or singing a duet with one's own single voice; not the lightest tap would mine hostess give to the shuttlecock;—not a note would she contribute to the concert. She might almost as well have been born dumb, and but for a few stray noes and yeses, and once in a quarter of an hour some savourless inquiry, she might certainly have passed for such. She would not even talk of the weather. Then her way of listening! One would have wagered that she was deaf. News was thrown away upon her; scandal did not rouse her; the edge of wit fell upon her dulness like the sword of Richard on the pillow of Saladin. There never was such a woman! Her drawing-room, too, lacked all the artificial aids of conversation; no books, no newspapers, no children, no dogs; nothing but Mrs. Aubrey and her knitted squares, and an old Persian cat, who lay stretched on the hearth-rug, as impassible as his mistress; a cat so iniquitously quiet, that he would neither play, nor pur, nor scratch, nor give any token of existence beyond mere breathing. I don't think, if a mouse had come across him, that he would have condescended to notice it.

Such was the state of things within the room; without, it was nearly as bad. Her house, one of the best in W., was situate in a new street standing slant-wise to one of the entrances of the town; a street of great gentility but of little resort, and, above all, no thoroughfare. So that after going to the window to look for a subject, and seeing nothing but the dead wall of an opposite chapel, we were driven back to the sofa to expatiate for the twentieth time on Selim's beauty, and admire once again the eternal knitting. Oh the horror of these morning visits!

One very great aggravation of the calamity, was the positive certainty of finding Mrs. Aubrey at home. The gentle satisfaction with which one takes a ticket from one's card-case, after hearing the welcome answer, "my mistress is just walked out!" never befell one at Mrs. Aubrey's. She never took a walk, although she did sometimes, moved by the earnest advice of her apothecary, get so far as to talk of doing so. The weather was always too hot, or too cold; or it had been raining; or it looked likely to rain; or the streets were dirty; or the roads were dusty; or the sun shone; or the sun did not shine (either reason would serve—her laziness was much indebted to that bright luminary); or somebody had called; or somebody might call; or (and this I believe was the excuse that she most commonly made to herself) she had not time to walk on account of her knitting, she wanted to get on with that.

The only time that I ever saw her equipped in out-of-door costume, was one unexceptionable morning in April, when the sun, the wind, the sky and the earth, were all as bright, and sweet, and balmy, as if they had put themselves in order on purpose to receive an unaccustomed visiter. I met her just as she was issuing slowly from the parlour, and enchanted at my good fortune, entreated, with equal truth and politeness, that I might not keep her within. She entered into no contest of civility; but returned with far more than her usual alacrity into the parlour, rang the bell for her maid, sat down on her dear sofa, and was forthwith unclogged, unshawled, and unbonneted, seemingly as much rejoiced at the respite, as a school-boy reprieved from the rod, or a thief from the gallows. I never saw such an expression of relief, of escape from a great evil, on any human countenance. It would have been quite barbarous to have pressed her to take her intended walk: and, moreover, it would have been altogether useless. She had satisfied her conscience with the attempt, and was now set in to her beloved knitting in con-

tented obstinacy. The whole world would not have moved her from that sofa.

She did however exchange evening visits, in a quiet melancholy way, with two or three ladies her near neighbours, to whose houses she was carried in the stately ease of a sedan-chair:—for in those days *flies* were not; at which time the knitting was replaced by cassino. Those visits were, if not altogether so silent, yet very nearly as dull as the inflictions of the morning; her companions (if companions they may be called) being for the most part persons of her own calibre, although somewhat more loquacious. They had a beau or two belonging to this West Street coterie, which even beaux failed to enliven; a powdered physician, rather pompous; a bald curate, very prim; and a simpering semi-bald apothecary, who brushed a few straggling locks up to the top of his crown and tried to make them pass for a head of hair; he was by far the most gallant man of the party, and amongst them might almost be reckoned amusing.

So passed the two first years of Mrs. Aubrey's residence in W. The third brought her a guest whose presence was felt as a relief by every body, perhaps the only woman who could have kept her company constantly, to the equal satisfaction of both parties.

Miss Dale was the daughter of a deceased officer, with a small independence, who boarded in the winter in Charter-House Square, and passed her summer in visiting her friends. She was what is called a genteel little woman, of an age that seemed to vary with the light and the hour; oldish in the morning, in the evening almost young, always very smartly dressed, very good-humoured, and very lively. Her spirits were really astonishing; how she could not only appear gay, but be gay in such an atmosphere of dulness, still puzzles me to think of. There was no French blood either, which might have accounted for the phenomenon; her paternal grandfather having been in his time high sheriff for the county of Notts; a genuine English country gentleman—and her mother, strange to relate, a renegado quakeress, expelled from the Society of Friends for the misdemeanour of espousing an officer. Some sympathy might exist there; no doubt the daughter would have been as ready to escape from a community of lawn caps and drab gowns as the mother. Her love of pink ribbons was certainly hereditary; and, however derived, her temper was as thoroughly *couleur de rose* as her cap trimming. Through the long quiet mornings, the formal visits, the slow dull dinners, she preserved one unvarying gaiety, carried the innovation of smiles amongst the insipid gravities of the cassino table; and actually struck up an intermitting flirtation with the apothecary—which I, in my ignorance, expected to find issue in a marriage, and was simple enough to be astonished, when one morning the gentleman brought home a cherry-cheeked bride, almost young enough to be his grand-daughter.

The loss of a lover, however, had no effect on Miss Dale's spirits. I have never known any thing more enviable than the buoyancy of her temper. She was not by any means too clever for her company, or too well-informed; never shocked their prejudices, or startled their ignorance, nor ever indeed said any thing remarkable at all. On the contrary, I think that her talk, if recollected, would seem, although always amiable and inoffensive, somewhat vapid and savourless; but her prattle was so effervescent, so *up*—the cheerfulness was so natural, so real—that contrary to the effect of most sprightly conversation, it was quite contagious, and even exhilarated, as much as any thing could exhilarate, the sober circle amongst whom she moved.

She had another powerful attraction in her extraordinary pliancy of mind. No sooner had the stage-coach conveyed her safely to the door of the large house in West Street, than all her Charter-House Square associations vanished from her mind; it seemed as if she had left locked up in her drawers with her winter apparel every idea not West Stretian. She was as if she had lived in W. all her days: had been born there, and there meant to die. She even divested herself of the allowable London pride, which looks down so scornfully on country dignitaries, admired the Mayor, revered the corporation, preferred the powdered physician to Sir Henry Halford, and extolled the bald curate as the most eminent preacher in England, Mr. Harness and Mr. Benson notwithstanding.

So worthy a denizen of West Street was of course hailed there with great delight. Mrs. Aubrey, always in her silent way glad to receive her friends, went so far as to testify some pleasure at the sight of Miss Dale; and the Persian cat, going beyond his mistress in the activity of his welcome, fairly sprang into her lap. The visits grew longer and longer, more and more frequent, and at last, on some diminution of income, ended in her coming regularly to live with Mrs. Aubrey, partly as humble companion, partly as friend: a most desirable increase to that tranquil establishment, which was soon after enlarged by the accession of a far more important visiter.

Besides her daughter, whom she would have probably forgotten if our inquiries had not occasionally reminded her that such a person was in existence, Mrs. Aubrey had a son in India, who did certainly slip her memory, except just twice a year when letters arrived from Bengal. She herself never wrote to either of her children, nor did I ever hear her mention Mr. Aubrey till one day, when she announced, with rather more animation than common, that poor William had returned to England on account of ill health, and that she expected him in W. that evening.

In the course of a few days my father called on the invalid, and we became acquainted. He was an elegant-looking man, in the prime of life, high in the Company's service, and already possessed of considerable wealth. His arrival excited a great sensation in W. and the neighbourhood. It was the eve of a general election, and some speculating alderman did him the favour of making an attack upon his purse, by fixing on him as a candidate to oppose the popular member; whilst certain equally speculating mammas meditated a more covert attack on his heart, through the charms of their unmarried daughters. Both parties were fated to disappointment; he waved off either sort of address with equal disdain, and had the good luck to get quit of his popularity almost as rapidly as he had acquired it.

Sooth to say, a man with more eminent qualifications for rendering himself disagreeable than were possessed by Mr. Aubrey, seldom made his appearance in civilized society. He had nothing in common with his good-humoured mother but her hatred of trouble and of talking; and having the misfortune to be very clever and very proud, tall and stately in his person, with a head habitually thrown back, bright black scornful eyes and a cold disdainful smile, did contrive to gratify his own self-love by looking down upon other people more affrontingly than the self-love of the said people could possibly endure. Nobody knew any harm of Mr. Aubrey, but nobody could abide him; so that it being perfectly clear that he would have nothing to say, either to the borough or the young ladies, the attentions offered to him by town and country suddenly ceased; it being to this hour a moot point whether he or the neighbourhood first sent the other to Coventry.

He, on his part, right glad, as it seemed, to be rid of their officious civility, remained quietly in his mother's house, very fanciful and a little ill; talking between whiles of an intended visit to Leamington or Cheltenham, but as easily diverted from a measure so unsuited to his habits as an abode at a public place, as Mrs. Aubrey herself had been from a morning walk. All the summer he lingered at W., and all the autumn; the winter found him still there; and at last, he declared that he had made up his mind to relinquish India altogether, and to purchase an estate in England.

By this time our little world had become accustomed to his haughty manner, which had the advantage of being equally ungracious to every one (people will put up with a great deal in good company; it is the insolence which selects its object that gives indelible offence); and a few who had access to him on business, such as lawyers and physicians, speaking in high terms of his intelligence and information, whilst tradesmen of all classes were won by his liberality, Mr. Aubrey was in some danger of undergoing a second attack of popularity, when he completely destroyed his rising reputation by a measure the most unexpected and astonishing—he married Miss Dale, to the inexpressible affront of every young lady of fashion in the neighbourhood. He actually married Miss Dale, and all W. spoke of her as the artfulest woman that ever wore a wedding-ring, and pitied poor Mrs. Aubrey, whose humble companion had thus ensnared her unwary son. Nothing was heard but sympathy for her imputed sufferings on this melancholy occasion, mixed with abuse of the unfortunate bride, whose extraordinary luck in making so brilliant an alliance had caused her popularity to vanish as speedily as her husband's.

With these reports tingling in my ears, I went to pay the wedding visit to Mrs. Aubrey, senior, delighted at the event myself, both as securing much of good to Miss Dale, who was just the person to enjoy the blessings of her lot, and pass lightly over the evil; and as a most proper and fitting conclusion to the airs of her spouse; but a little doubtful how my old acquaintance might take the matter, especially as it involved the loss of her new daughter's company, and must of necessity cause her some little trouble. I was never more puzzled in my life, whether to assume a visage of condolence or of congratulation;—and the certainty that her countenance would afford no indication either of joy or sorrow, enhanced my perplexity. I was, however, immediately relieved by the nature of her employment;—she was sitting surrounded by sempstresses, at a table covered with knitting and wedding-cake, whilst her maidens were putting together, under her inspection, that labour of her life, the tessellated quilt; the only wedding present by which she could sufficiently compliment her son, or adequately convey her sense of the merits and excellence of his fair bride! Her pleasure in this union was so great, that she actually talked about it, presented the cake herself, and poured out with her own hands the wine to be drunk to the health of the new-married couple.

Mr. Aubrey had purchased a place in Devonshire, and six months after, his mother quitted W. to go and live near him. But, poor dear lady, she did not live there—she died. The unsettling and the journey, and the settling again, terrible operations to one who seemed, like the Turkish women, to have roots to her feet, fairly killed her. She was as unfit to move as a two-year old cabbage, and drooped, and withered, and dropped down dead of the transplantation. Peace to her memory! the benediction that she would assuredly have preferred to all others. Peace to her ashes!

THE TWO VALENTINES.

Valentine's Day is one of great stir and emotion in our little village. In large towns, —especially in London—the wicked habit of quizzing has entirely destroyed the romance and illusion of that tender anniversary. But we in the country are, for the most part, uninfected by "over-wiseness," or "over-niceness," (to borrow two of Sir Walter Raleigh's quaint but expressive phrases), and are content to keep the gracious festival of love-making and *billets-doux*, as simply and confidingly as our ancestors of old. I do not mean to say, that every one of our youths and maidens pair on that day, like the "goldfinch, bullfinch, greenfinch, and all the finches of the grove."—Heaven forbid!—Nor that the spirit of fun hath so utterly evaporated from us, that we have no display of innocent trick or harmless raillery on that licensed morn:—all that I contend for is, that, in our parts, some truth may be found lurking amidst the fictions of those annual rhymes—that many a village beau hath broken the ice of courtship—and that many a village belle hath felt her heart throb, as she glanced at the emblematic scroll, and tried to guess the sender, in spite of the assumed carelessness, the saucy head-tossings, and the pretty poutings with which she attempted to veil her real interest. In short, there is something like sincerity amongst us, even in a Valentine;—as witness the number of wooings begun on the Fourteenth of February, and finished in that usual end of courtships and comedies—a wedding—before Whitsuntide. Our little lame clerk, who keeps a sort of catalogue *raisonnée* of marriages, as a companion to the parish-register, computes those that issue from the bursting Valentine-bag of our postman, at not less than three and a half per annum—that is to say, seven between two years.

But—besides the matches which spring, directly or indirectly, from the *billets* commonly called Valentines—there is another superstition connected with the day, which has no small influence on the destinies of our country maidens. They hold, that the first man whom they espy in the morning—provided that such man be neither of kin to them, nor married, nor an inmate of the same house—is to pass for their Valentine during the day; and, perhaps (for this is the secret clause which makes the observation important,) to prove their husband for life. It is strange how much faith they put in this kind of *sortes virgilianæ*—this turning over the living leaf of destiny; and how much pains they will take to cheat the fates, and see the man they like best first in spite of the stars! One damsel, for instance, will go a quarter of a mile about, in the course of her ordinary avocations, in order to avoid a youth whom she does not fancy; another shall sit within doors, with her eyes shut, half the morning, until she hears the expected voice of the favourite swain; whilst, on their part, our country lads take care to place themselves each in the way of his chosen she; and a pretty lass would think herself overlooked, if she had not three or four standing round her door, or sauntering beneath her window, before sunrise.

Now, one of the prettiest girls in our parish, is, undoubtedly, Sally North. Pretty is hardly the proper phrase—Sally is a magnificent girl; —tall, far above the common height of woman, and large in proportion—but formed with the most exact symmetry, and distinguished by the firm, erect, and vigorous carriage, and the light, elastic step, peculiar to those who are early accustomed to walk under burthens. Sally's father is an eminent baker—the most celebrated personage in our village; besides supplying half the next town with genuine country bread, which he carries there himself in his huge tilted cart, he hath struck into other arts of the oven, and furnishes all the breakfast-tables, within five miles, with genuine London rolls. No family of gentility can possibly get through the first meal without them. The rolls, to be sure, are—just like other rolls—very good, and nothing more; but some whim of a great man, or caprice of a fine lady, has put them in fashion; and so Sally walks round the parish every morning, with her great basket, piled to the very brim, poised on her pretty head—now lending it the light support of one slender hand, and now of another; the dancing black eyes, and the bright blushing smile, that flash from under her burthen, as well as the perfect ease and grace with which she trips along, entirely taking away all painful impression of drudgery or toil. She is quite a figure for a painter, is Sally North—and the gipsy knows it. There is a gay good-humoured consciousness of her power and her beauty, as she passes on her morning round, carolling as merrily as the lark over her head, that makes no small part of her charm. The lass is clever, too—sharp and shrewd in her dealings—and, although sufficiently civil and respectful to her superiors, and never actually wanting in decorum, is said to dismiss the compliments of some of her beaux with a repartee generally *brusque*, and frequently poignant.

Of beaux—between the lacqueys of the houses that she takes in her circuit, and the wayfarers whom she picks up on the road—Sally hath more than a court beauty; and two of them—Mr. Thompson, my lord's gentleman, a man of substance and gravity, not much turned of fifty; and Daniel Tubb, one of Sir John's gardeners, a strapping red-haired youth, as comely and merry as herself—were severally recommended, by the old and the young, as fitting matches for the pretty mistress of the rolls. But Sally silenced Mr. Thompson's

fine speeches by a very stout, sturdy, steady "No;" and even inflicted a similar sentence (although so mildly, that Daniel did not quite despair) on his young rival; for Sally, who was seventeen last Candlemas-day, had been engaged these three years!

The love affair had begun at the Free School at Aberleigh; and the object of it, by name Stephen Long, was the son of a little farmer in the neighbourhood, and about the same age with his fair mistress. There the resemblance ceased; for Stephen had been as incomparably the shortest and ugliest boy in the school as Sally was the tallest and prettiest girl—being, indeed, of that stunted and large-headed appearance, which betokens a dwarf, and is usually accompanied by features as unpleasant in their expression as they are grotesque in their form. But then he was the head boy: and being held up by the master as a miracle of reading, writing and ciphering, was a personage of no small importance at Aberleigh; and Sally being with all her cleverness, something of a dunce, owed to Stephen much obligation for assistance in the school business. He arranged, cast up, and set in order on the slate, the few straggling figures which poor Sally called her sum—painted over, and reduced to something like form, the misshapen and disjointed letters in her copy-book — learnt all her lessons himself, and tried most ineffectually to teach them to her—and, finally, covered her unconquerable want of memory by the loudest and boldest prompting ever heard out of a theatre. Many a rap of the knuckles have Sally North's blunders cost Stephen Long, and vainly did the master admonish him to hold his tongue. Prompt he would—although so incorrigibly stupid was his fair mistress, that, even when the words were put into her mouth, she stumbled at repeating them; and Stephen's officious kindness commonly ended in their being punished in company—a consummation, for his share of which the boy was gallant enough to rejoice. She was fully sensible of this flattering devotion, and repaid it, as far as lay in her power, by taking him under her protection at play-times, in return for the services which he rendered her in school; and becoming more and more bound to him by a series of mutual good offices, finished by vindicating his ugliness, denying his pedantry, and, when twitted with his dwarfishness, boldly predicting that he would grow. They walked together, talked together, laughed, romped, and quarrelled — in short it was a decided attachment; and when our village Romeo was taken as an apprentice by a cousin of his mother's — a respectable hosier in Cheapside—it is on record, that his Juliet—the lightest-hearted personage in the neighbourhood—cried for an hour, and moped for a day. All the school stood amazed at her constancy!

Stephen, on his side, bore the test of absence, like a knight of Amadis his day. Never was *preux* chevalier so devoted to the lady of his love. Every letter home contained some tender message or fond inquiry; and although the messages became gradually less and less intelligible, as the small pedantry of the country schoolboy ripened into the full-blown affectation of the London apprentice, still Sally was far from quarrelling with a love-message, on so small a ground as not understanding it; whilst, however mysterious his words might seem, his presents spoke his affection in a more homely and convincing language. Of such tokens there was no lack. The very first packet that he sent home, consisting of worsted mittens for his old grandmother, a pair of cotton hose for his sister, and a nightcap for his father, contained also a pair of scarlet garters for Sally; which attention was followed up at every opportunity by pincushions, ribbons, thimbles, needle-cases, and as great a variety of female ware as that with which Autolycus's basket was furnished. No wonder that Sally, in spite of occasional flirtations with Daniel Tubb, continued tolerably constant; especially as one of Stephen's sisters, who had been at service in London, affirmed that he was so much improved, as to be one of the smartest beaux in all Cheapside.

So affairs continued until this identical Valentine's Day. Last spring, a written Valentine, exceedingly choice in its decorations, had made its appearance at Master North's; rather out of date, it must be owned, since, being enclosed in a packet, to save postage, and sent by an opportunity, as the country phrase goes, it had been detained, either by accident or waggery, till the first of April; but this was none of Stephen's fault; there was the Valentine in the newest London taste, consisting of a raised group of roses and heart's-ease, executed on a kind of paper-cut work, which, on being lifted up, turned into a cage, enclosing a dove;—tender emblem!—with all the rapidity of a change in a pantomime. There the Valentine was;—equally known for Stephen's, by the savour of the verses and the flourish of the signature—the finest specimen of poetry and penmanship, as my friend the schoolmaster triumphantly asserted, that had ever been seen in Aberleigh. "The force of *writing* could no farther go;" so, this year, our "good apprentice" determined to come himself to be her personal Valentine, and to renew if not complete their early engagement.

On this determination being announced to Sally, it occasioned no small perturbation in that fair damsel, equally alarmed at the mental accomplishments and the personal defects of her constant swain. In fact, her feeling towards Stephen had been almost as ideal and unsubstantial as the shadow of a rainbow. She liked to think of him when she had nothing better to do; or to talk of him when she had nothing better to say; or to be puzzled

by his verses, or laughed at for his homage; but as a real substantial Valentine, a present wooer, a future husband, and he so ugly, and a poet too—Oh dear! she was frightened to think of it! This impression first broke forth to his sister—who communicated the news of his intended arrival—in a variety of questions, as to Stephen's height, and size, and shape, and complexion; especially as compared with Daniel Tubb's! and was afterwards displayed to that rustic adorer himself; not by words, indeed, but by the encouraging silence and saucy smile with which she listened to his account of the debarkation of his cockney rival, from the top of the B—— stage. "He's tinier than ever," quoth Daniel, "and the smartest dandy that ever was seen. I shall be your Valentine, after all, Sally," pursued her swain; "for I could hide him with the shadow of my fist."

This was Valentine's-eve. Valentine's-morn saw Sally eyeing the two rivals, through a peep-hole in her little check curtain, as they stood side by side, on the green, watching for the first glimpse of their divinity. Never was seen such a contrast. Stephen, whose original square dwarfishness had fined down into a miniature dandy — sallow, strutting, and all over small—the very Tom Thumb of apprentices! — Daniel, taller, bigger, ruddier, and heartier than ever—the actual Goliath of country lads! Never was such a contrast seen. At length Sally, laughing, blushing, and bridling, sallied forth from the cottage—her huge roll basket, but not as usual filled with rolls, carried, not on her head, but in her hands. "I'm your Valentine, Sally! am I not?" exclaimed Daniel Tubb, darting towards her, "you saw me first; I know you saw me first," continued the ardent lover, proceeding to claim the salute usual on such occasions. "Pshaw! nonsense! let me alone then, Daniel, can't you?" was the reply of his mistress, advancing to Stephen, who perhaps dazzled by the beauty, perhaps astounded by the height of the fair giantess, remained motionless and speechless on the other side of the road. "Would you like a ride in my basket this fine morning, Mr. Stephen?" said the saucy lass, emptying all his gifts, garters, pincushions, ribbons, and Valentines, from their huge reservoir, and depositing it on the ground at his feet. "Don't be afraid; I'll be bound to carry you as easily as the little Italian boy carries *his* tray of images. He's not half the weight of the rolls — is he, Daniel?" pursued the unmerciful beauty. "For my part, I think he has grown shorter.—Come, do step in!" And, with the word, the triumphant Daniel lifted up the discomfited beau, placed him safely in the basket, and hoisted the burthen on Sally's head — to the unspeakable diversion of that saucy maiden, and the complete cure of Master Stephen's love.—No need, after this, to declare which of the two rivals is Sally North's Valentine. I think, with the little clerk, that they will be married at Whitsuntide, if not before.

A COUNTRY APOTHECARY.

One of the most important personages in a small country town is the apothecary. He takes rank next after the rector and the attorney, and before the curate; and could be much less easily dispensed with than either of those worthies, not merely as holding "fate and physic" in his hand, but as the general, and as it were official, associate, adviser, comforter, and friend, of all ranks and all ages, of high and low, rich and poor, sick and well. I am no despiser of dignities; but twenty emperors shall be less intensely missed in their wide dominions than such a man as my friend John Hallett in his own small sphere.

The spot which was favoured with the residence of this excellent person, was the small town of Hazelby, in Dorsetshire; a pretty little place, where every thing seems at a standstill. It was originally built in the shape of the letter T; a long broad market-place (still so called, although the market be gone) serving for the perpendicular stem, traversed by a straight, narrow, horizontal street, to answer for the top line. Not one addition has occurred to interrupt this architectural regularity since; some fifty years ago, a rich London tradesman built, at the west end of the horizontal street, a wide-fronted single house, with two low wings, iron palisades before, and a fish-pond opposite, which still goes by the name of New Place, and is balanced, at the east end of the street, by an erection of nearly the same date, a large, square, dingy mansion, enclosed within high walls, inhabited by three maiden sisters, and called, probably by way of nickname, the Nunnery. New Place being on the left of the road, and the Nunnery on the right, the T has now something the air of the Italic capital *T*, turned up at one end and down on the other. The latest improvements are the bow-window in the market-place, commanding the pavement both ways, which the late brewer, Andrews, threw out in his snug parlour some twenty years back, and where he used to sit smoking, with the sash up, in summer afternoons, enjoying himself, good man; and the great room at the Swan, originally built by the speculative publican, Joseph Allwright, for an assembly-room. That speculation did not answer. The assembly, in spite of canvassing and patronage, and the active exertions of all the young ladies in the neighbourhood, dwindled away and died at the end of two winters: then it became a club-room for the hunt; but the hunt

quarrelled with Joseph's cookery: then a market-room for the farmers; but the farmers (it was the high-price time) quarrelled with Joseph's wine: then it was converted into the magistrate's room—the bench; but the bench and the market went away together, and there was an end of justicing: then Joseph tried the novel attraction (to borrow a theatrical phrase) of a billiard-table; but, alas! that novelty succeeded as ill as if it had been theatrical: there were not customers enough to pay the marker: at last, it has merged finally in that unconscious receptacle of pleasure and pain, a post-office; although Hazelby has so little to do with traffic of any sort—even the traffic of correspondence—that a saucy mail-coach will often carry on its small bag, and as often forget to call for the London bag in return.

In short, Hazelby is an insignificant place; —my readers will look for it in vain in the map of Dorsetshire; it is omitted, poor dear town!—left out by the map-maker with as little remorse as a dropped letter!—and it is also an old-fashioned place. It has not even a cheap shop for female gear. Every thing in the one store which it boasts, kept by Martha Deane, linen-draper and haberdasher, is dear and good as things were wont to be. You may actually get there thread made of flax, from the gouty, uneven, clumsy, shiny fabric, yclept whited-brown, to the delicate commodity of Lisle, used for darning muslin. I think I was never more astonished than when, on asking, from the mere force of habit, for thread, I was presented, instead of the pretty lattice-wound balls or snowy reels of cotton, with which that demand is usually answered, with a whole drawerful of skeins, peeping from their plue papers—such skeins as in my youth a thrifty maiden would draw into the nicely-stitched compartments of that silken repository, a housewife, or fold into a congeries of graduated thread-papers, "fine by degrees and beautifully less." The very literature of Hazelby is doled out at the pastry-cook's, in a little one-windowed shop, kept by Matthew Wise. Tarts occupy one end of the counter, and reviews the other; whilst the shelves are parcelled out between books, and dolls, and gingerbread. It is a question, by which of his trades poor Matthew gains least; he is so shabby, so threadbare, and so starved.

Such a town would hardly have known what to do with a highly-informed and educated surgeon, such as one now generally sees in that most liberal profession. My friend, John Hallett, suited it exactly. His predecessor, Mr. Simon Shuter, had been a small, wrinkled, spare old gentleman, with a short cough and a thin voice, who always seemed as if he needed an apothecary himself. He wore generally a full suit of drab, a flaxen wig of the sort called a Bob Jerom, and a very tight muslin stock; a costume which he had adopted in his younger days in imitation of the most eminent physician of the next city, and continued to the time of his death. Perhaps the cough might have been originally an imitation, also, ingrafted on the system by habit. It had a most unsatisfactory sound, and seemed more like a trick than a real effort of nature. His talk was civil, prosy, and fidgety, much addicted to small scandal, and that kind of news which passes under the denomination of tittle-tattle. He was sure to tell one half of the town where the other drank tea, and recollected the blancmangers and jellies on a supper-table, or described a new gown, with as much science and unction as if he had been used to make jellies and wear gowns in his own person. Certain professional peculiarities might have favoured the supposition. His mode of practice was exactly that popularly attributed to old women. He delighted in innocent remedies—manna, magnesia, and camphor julep; never put on a blister in his life; and would sooner, from pure complaisance, let a patient die, than administer an unpalatable prescription.

So qualified, to say nothing of his gifts in tea-drinking, casino, and quadrille (whist was too many for him), his popularity could not be questioned. When he expired, all Hazelby mourned. The lamentation was general. The women of every degree (to borrow a phrase from that great phrase-monger, Horace Walpole) "cried quarts;" and the procession to the church-yard — that very church-yard to which he had himself followed so many of his patients—was now attended by all of them that remained alive.

It was felt that the successor of Mr. Simon Shutter would have many difficulties to encounter. My friend, John Hallett, "came, and saw, and overcame." John was what is usually called a rough diamond. Imagine a short, clumsy, stout-built figure, almost as broad as it is long, crowned by a bullet-head, covered with shaggy brown hair, sticking out in every direction; the face round and solid, with a complexion originally fair, but dyed one red by exposure to all sorts of weather; open good-humoured eyes of a greenish cast, his admirers called them hazel; a wide mouth, full of large white teeth; a cocked-up nose, and a double chin; bearing altogether a strong resemblance to a print which I once saw hanging up in an alehouse parlour, of "the celebrated divine" (to use the identical words of the legend) "Doctor Martin Luther."

The condition of a country apothecary being peculiarly liable to the inclemency of the season, John's dress was generally such as might bid defiance to wind or rain, or snow or hail. If any thing, he wrapt up most in the summer, having a theory that people were never so apt to take cold as in hot weather. He usually wore a bearskin great-coat, a silk handkerchief

over his cravat, top boots on those sturdy pillars his legs, a huge pair of overalls, and a hat, which, from the day in which it first came into his possession to that in which it was thrown aside, never knew the comfort of being freed from its oilskin—never was allowed to display the glossy freshness of its sable youth. Poor dear hat! how its vanity (if hats have vanity) must have suffered! For certain its owner had none, unless a lurking pride in his own bluffness and bluntness may be termed such. He piqued himself on being a plain downright Englishman, and on a voice and address pretty much like his apparel, rough, strong, and warm, and fit for all weathers. A heartier person never lived.

In his profession he was eminently skilful, bold, confident, and successful. The neighbouring physicians liked to come after Mr. Hallett; they were sure to find nothing to undo. And blunt and abrupt as was his general manner, he was kind and gentle in a sick-room; only nervous disorders, the pet diseases of Mr. Simon Shuter, he could not abide. He made short work with them; frightened them away, as one does by children when they have the hiccough; or if the malady were pertinacious and would not go, he fairly turned off the patient. Once or twice, indeed, on such occasions, the patient got the start, and turned him off; Mrs. Emery, for instance, the lady's maid at New Place, most delicate and mincing of waiting-gentlewomen, motioned him from her presence; and Miss Deane, daughter of Martha Deane, haberdasher, who, after completing her education at a boarding-school, kept a closet full of millinery in a little den behind her mamma's shop, and was by many degrees the finest lady in Hazelby, was so provoked at being told by him that nothing ailed her, that, to prove her weakly condition, she pushed him by main force out of doors.

With these exceptions Mr. Hallett was the delight of the whole town, as well as of all the farm-houses within six miles round. He just suited the rich yeomanry, cured their diseases, and partook of their feasts; was constant at christenings, and a man of prime importance at weddings. A country merry-making was nothing without "the Doctor." He was "the very prince of good fellows;" had a touch of epicurism, which, without causing any distaste of his own homely fare, made dainties acceptable when they fell in his way; was a most absolute carver; prided himself upon a sauce of his own invention, for fish and game—"Hazelby sauce" he called it; and was universally admitted to be the best compounder of a bowl of punch in the country.

Besides these rare convivial accomplishments, his gay and jovial temper rendered him the life of the table. There was no resisting his droll faces, his droll stories, his jokes, his tricks, or his laugh—the most contagious cachinnation that ever was heard. Nothing in the shape of fun came amiss to him. He would join in a catch or roar out a solo, which might be heard a mile off; would play at hunt the slipper, or blindman's-buff; was a great man in a country dance, and upon very extraordinary occasions would treat the company to a certain remarkable hornpipe, which put the walls in danger of tumbling about their ears, and belonged to him as exclusively as the Hazelby sauce. It was a sort of parody on a pas seul which he had once seen at the Opera-house, in which his face, his figure, his costume, his rich humour, and his strange, awkward, unexpected activity, told amazingly. "The force of frolic could no further go," than "the Doctor's hornpipe." It was the climax of jollity.

But the chief scene of Mr. Hallett's gaiety lay out of doors, in a very beautiful spot, called the Down, a sloping upland, about a mile from Hazelby; a side view of which, with its gardens and orchards, its pretty church peeping from amongst lime and yew trees, and the fine piece of water, called Hazelby Pond, it commanded. The Down itself was an extensive tract of land covered with the finest verdure, backed by a range of hills, and surrounded by coppice-woods, large patches of which were scattered over the turf, like so many islands on an emerald sea. Nothing could be more beautiful or more impenetrable than these thickets; they were principally composed of birch, holly, hawthorn, and maple, woven together by garlands of woodbine, interwreathed and intertwisted by bramble and briar, till even the sheep, although the bits of their snowy fleece left on the bushes bore witness to the attempt, could make no way in the leafy mass. Here and there a huge oak or beech rose towering above the rich underwood; and all around, as far as the eye could pierce, the borders of this natural shrubbery were studded with a countless variety of woodland flowers. When the old thorns were in blossom, or when they were succeeded by the fragrant woodbine and the delicate briar-rose, it was like a garden, if it were possible to fancy any garden so peopled with birds.*

The only human habitation on this charming

* A circumstance of some curiosity in natural history occurred for several successive years on this down. There was constantly in one of the thickets a blackbird's nest, of which the young were distinguished by a striking peculiarity. The old birds (probably the same pair,) were of the usual sable colour, but the plumage of their progeny was milk-white, as white as a swan, without a single discoloured feather. They were always taken, and sold at high prices to the curious in such freaks of nature. The late bishop of Winchester had a pair of them for a long time in the aviary at Farnham Castle; they were hardy, and the male was a fine song-bird; but all attempts to breed from them failed. They died, "and left the world no copy."

spot was the cottage of the shepherd, old Thomas Tolfrey, who, with his grand-daughter, Jemima, a light pretty maiden of fourteen, tended the flocks on the Down; and the rustic carols of this little lass and the tinkling of the sheep-bells were usually the only sounds that mingled with the sweet songs of the feathered tribes. On May-days and holidays, however, the thickets resounded with other notes of glee than those of the linnet and the wood-lark. Fairs, revels, May-games, and cricket-matches—all were holden on the Down; and there would John Hallett sit, in his glory, universal umpire and referee of cricketer, wrestler, or back-sword player, the happiest and greatest man in the field. Little Jemima never failed to bring her grandfather's arm-chair, and place it under the old oak for the good doctor; I question whether John would have exchanged his throne for that of the king of England.

On these occasions he certainly would have been the better for that convenience, which he piqued himself on not needing—a partner. Generally speaking, he really, as he used to boast, did the business of three men; but when a sickly season and a Maying happened to come together, I cannot help suspecting that the patients had the worst of it. Perhaps, however, a partner might not have suited him. He was sturdy and independent to the verge of a fault, and would not have brooked being called to account, or brought to a reckoning by any man under the sun; still less would he endure the thought of that more important and durable co-partnery—marriage. He was a most determined bachelor; and so afraid of being mistaken for a wooer, or encouraging the reputation of a gay deceiver, that he was as uncivil as his good-nature would permit to every unwedded female from sixteen to sixty, and had nearly fallen into some scrapes on that account with the spinsters of the town, accustomed to the soft silkiness of Mr. Simon Shuter; but they got used to it—it was the man's way; and there was an indirect flattery in his fear of their charms, which the maiden ladies, especially the elder ones, found very mollifying; so he was forgiven.

In his shop and his household he had no need either of partner or wife: the one was excellently managed by an old rheumatic journeyman, slow in speech and of vinegar aspect, who had been a pedagogue in his youth, and now used to limp about with his Livy in his pocket, and growl as he compounded the medicines over the bad latinity of the prescriptions; the other was equally well conducted by an equally ancient housekeeper and a cherry-cheeked niece, the orphan daughter of his only sister, who kept every thing within doors in the bright and shining order in which he delighted. John Hallett, notwithstanding the roughness of his aspect, was rather knick-knacky in his tastes; a great patron of small inventions, such as the improved ne-plus-ultra cork-screw, and the latest patent snuffers. He also trifled with horticulture, dabbled in tulips, was a connoisseur in pinks, and had gained a prize for polyanthuses. The garden was under the especial care of his pretty niece, Miss Margaret, a grateful, warm-hearted girl, who thought she never could do enough to please her good uncle, and prove her sense of his kindness. He was indeed as fond of her as if he had been her father, and as kind.

Perhaps there was nothing very extraordinary in his goodness to the gentle and cheerful little girl who kept his walks so trim and his parlour so neat, who always met him with a smile, and who (last and strongest tie to a generous mind,) was wholly dependent on him—had no friend on earth but himself. There was nothing very uncommon in that. But John Hallett was kind to every one, even where the sturdy old English prejudices, which he cherished as virtues, might seem most likely to counteract his gentler feelings. One instance of his benevolence and his delicacy shall conclude this sketch.

Several years ago an old French emigré came to reside at Hazelby. He lodged at Matthew Wise's, of whose twofold shop for cakes and novels I have before made honourable mention, in the low three-cornered room, with a closet behind it, which Matthew had the impudence to call his first floor. Little was known of him but that he was a thin, pale, foreign-looking gentleman, who shrugged his shoulders in speaking, took a great deal of snuff, and made a remarkably low bow. The few persons with whom he had any communication spoke with amusement of his bad English, and with admiration of his good-humour; and it soon appeared, from a written paper placed in a conspicuous part of Matthew's shop, that he was an Abbé, and that he would do himself the honour of teaching French to any of the nobility or gentry of Hazelby who might think fit to employ him. Pupils dropt in rather slowly. The curate's daughters, and the attorney's son, and Miss Deane the milliner—but she found the language difficult, and left off, asserting that M. l'Abbé's snuff made her nervous. At last poor M. l'Abbé fell ill himself, really ill, dangerously ill, and Matthew Wise went in all haste to summon Mr. Hallett. Now Mr. Hallett had such an aversion to a Frenchman, in general, as a cat has to a dog; and was wont to erect himself into an attitude of defiance and wrath at the mere sight of the object of his antipathy. He hated and despised the whole nation, abhorred the language, and "would as lief," he assured Matthew, "have been called in to a toad." He went, however, grew interested in the case, which was difficult and complicated; exerted all his

skill, and in about a month accomplished a cure.

By this time he had also become interested in his patient, whose piety, meekness, and resignation, had won upon him in an extraordinary degree. The disease was gone, but a languor and lowness remained, which Mr. Hallett soon traced to a less curable disorder, poverty: the thought of the debt to himself evidently weighed on the poor Abbé's spirits, and our good apothecary at last determined to learn French purely to liquidate his own long bill. It was the drollest thing in the world to see this pupil of fifty, whose habits were so entirely unfitted for a learner, conning his task; or to hear him conjugating the verb avoir, or blundering through the first phrases of the easy dialogues. He was a most unpromising scholar, shuffled the syllables together in a manner that would seem incredible, and stumbled at every step of the pronunciation, against which his English tongue rebelled amain. Every now and then he solaced himself with a fluent volley of execrations in his own language, which the Abbé understood well enough to return, after rather a politer fashion, in French. It was a most amusing scene. But the motive! the generous, noble motive! M. l'Abbé, after a few lessons, detected this delicate artifice, and, touched almost to tears, insisted on dismissing his pupil, who, on his side, declared that nothing should induce him to abandon his studies. At last they came to a compromise. The cherry-cheeked Margaret took her uncle's post as a learner, which she filled in a manner much more satisfactory; and the good old Frenchman not only allowed Mr. Hallett to administer gratis to his ailments, but partook of his Sunday dinner as long as he lived.

WHEAT-HOEING.

A MORNING RAMBLE.

May the 3d.—Cold, bright weather. All within doors, sunny and chilly; all without, windy and dusty. It is quite tantalizing to see that brilliant sun careering through so beautiful a sky, and to feel little more warmth from his presence than one does from that of his fair but cold sister, the moon. Even the sky, beautiful as it is, has the look of that one sometimes sees in a very bright moonlight night—deeply, intensely blue, with white fleecy clouds driven vigorously along by a strong breeze—now veiling and now exposing the dazzling luminary around which they sail. A beautiful sky! and in spite of its coldness, a beautiful world! The effect of this backward spring has been to arrest the early flowers, to which heat is the great enemy; whilst the leaves and the later flowers have, nevertheless, ventured to peep out slowly and cautiously in sunny places—exhibiting, in the copses and hedge-rows, a pleasant mixture of March and May. And we, poor chilly mortals, must follow, as nearly as we can, the wise example of the May blossoms, by avoiding bleak paths and open commons, and creeping up the sheltered road to the vicarage—the pleasant sheltered road, where the western sun steals in between two rows of bright green elms, and the east wind is fenced off by the range of woody hills which rise abruptly before us, forming so striking a boundary to the picture.

How pretty this lane is, with its tall elms, just drest in their young leaves, bordering the sunny path, or sweeping in a semi-circle behind the clear pools, and the white cottages that are scattered along the way! You shall seldom see a cottage hereabout without an accompanying pond, all alive with geese and ducks, at the end of the little garden. Ah! here is Dame Simmons making a most original use of her piece of water, standing on the bank that divides it from her garden, and most ingeniously watering her onion bed with a new mop—now a dip, and now a twirl! Really I give her credit for the invention. It is as good an imitation of a shower as one should wish to see on a summer-day. A squirt is nothing to it!

And here is another break to the tall line of elms—the gate that leads into Farmer Thorpe's great enclosures. Eight, ten, fourteen people in this large field, wheat-hoeing. The couple nearest the gate, who keep aloof from all the rest, and are hoeing this furrow so completely in concert, step by step, and stroke for stroke, are Jem Tanner and Mabel Green. There is not a handsomer pair in the field or in the village. Jem, with his bright complexion, his curling hair, his clear blue eye, and his trim figure—set off to great advantage by his short jacket and trowsers and new straw hat; Mabel with her little stuff gown, and her white handkerchief and apron—defining so exactly her light and flexible shape—and her black eyes flashing from under a deep bonnet lined with pink, whose reflection gives to her bright dark countenance and dimpled cheeks a glow innocently artificial, which was the only charm that they wanted.

Jem and Mabel are, beyond all doubt, the handsomest couple in the field, and I am much mistaken if each have not a vivid sense of the charms of the other. Their mutual admiration was clear enough in their work; but it speaks still more plainly in their idleness. Not a stroke have they done for these five minutes; Jem, propped on his hoe, and leaning across the furrow, whispering soft nonsense; Mabel, blushing and smiling—now making believe to turn away—now listening, and looking up with a sweeter smile than ever, and a blush that

makes her bonnet-lining pale. Ah, Mabel! Mabel! Now they are going to work again; —no!—after three or four strokes, the hoes have somehow become entangled, and, without either advancing a step nearer the other, they are playing with these rustic implements as pretty a game at romps—showing off as nice a piece of rural flirtation—as ever was exhibited since wheat was hoed.

Ah, Mabel! Mabel! beware of Farmer Thorpe! He'll see, at a glance, that little will his corn profit by such labours. Beware, too, Jem Tanner!—for Mabel is, in some sort, an heiress; being the real niece and adopted daughter of our little lame clerk, who, although he looks such a tattered raggamuffin, that the very grave-diggers are ashamed of him, is well to pass in the world—keeps a scrub pony, —indeed he can hardly walk up the aisle—hath a share in the county fire-office — and money in the funds. Mabel will be an heiress, despite the tatterdemalion costume of her honoured uncle, which I think he wears out of coquetry, that the remarks which might otherwise fall on his miserable person — full as misshapen as that of any Hunchback recorded in the Arabian Tales—may find a less offensive vent on his raiment. Certain such a figure hath seldom been beheld out of church or in. Yet will Mabel, nevertheless, be a fortune; and, therefore, she must intermarry with another fortune, according to the rule made and provided in such cases; and the little clerk hath already looked her out a spouse, about his own standing — a widower in the next parish, with four children and a squint. Poor Jem Tanner! Nothing will that smart person or that pleasant speech avail with the little clerk;—never will he officiate at your marriage to his niece;—"amen" would "stick in his throat." Poor things! in what a happy oblivion of the world and its cares, Farmer Thorpe and the wheat-hoeing, the squinting shop-keeper and the little clerk, are they laughing and talking at this moment! Poor things! poor things!

Well, I must pursue my walk. How beautiful a mixture of flowers and leaves is in the high bank under this north hedge—quite an illustration of the blended seasons of which I spoke. An old irregular hedge-row is always beautiful, especially in the spring-time, when the grass, and mosses, and flowering weeds mingle best with the bushes and creeping plants that overhang them. But this bank is, most especially, various and lovely. Shall we try to analyze it? First, the clinging white-veined ivy, which crawls up the slope in every direction, the master-piece of that rich mosaic; then the brown leaves and the lilac blossoms of its fragrant namesake, the ground-ivy, which grows here so profusely; then the late-lingering primrose; then the delicate wood-sorrel; then the regular pink stars of the cranesbill, with its beautiful leaves; then the golden oxslip and the cowslip,—"cinque-spotted;" then the blue pansy, and the enamelled wild hyacinth; then the bright foliage of the briar-rose, which comes trailing its green wreaths amongst the flowers; then the bramble and the woodbine, creeping round the foot of a pollard oak, with its brown folded leaves; then a verdant mass—the black thorn, with its lingering blossoms—the hawthorn, with its swelling buds—the bushy maple—the long stems of the hazel—and between them, hanging like a golden plume over the bank, a splendid tuft of the blossomed broom; then, towering high above all, the tall and leafy elms. And this is but a faint picture of this hedge, on the meadowy side of which sheep are bleating, and where, every here and there, a young lamb is thrusting its pretty head between the trees.

Who is this approaching? Farmer Thorpe? Yes, of a certainty, it is that substantial yeoman, sallying forth from his substantial farm-house, which peeps out from between two huge walnut-trees on the other side of the road, with intent to survey his labourers in the wheat-field. Farmer Thorpe is a stout, square, sturdy personage of fifty, or thereabout, with a hard weather-beaten countenance, of that peculiar vermilion, all over alike, into which the action of the sun and wind sometimes tans a fair complexion; sharp shrewd features, and a keen grey eye. He looks completely like a man who will neither cheat nor be cheated: and such is his character—an upright, downright English yeoman —just always, and kind in a rough way—but given to fits of anger, and filled with an abhorrence of pilfering, and idleness, and trickery of all sorts, that makes him strict as a master, and somewhat stern at workhouse and vestry. I doubt if he will greatly relish the mode in which Jem and Mabel are administering the hoe in his wheat-drills. He will not reach the gate yet; for his usual steady active pace is turned, by a recent accident, into an unequal, impatient halt—as if he were alike angry with his lameness and the cause. I must speak to him as he passes—not merely as a due courtesy to a good neighbour, but to give the delinquents in the field notice to resume their hoeing; but not a word of the limp —that is a sore subject.

"A fine day, Mr. Thorpe!"

"We want rain, ma'am!"

And on, with great civility, but without pausing a moment, he is gone. He'll certainly catch Mabel and her lover philandering over his wheat-furrows. Well, that may take its chance!—they have his lameness in their favour—only that the cause of that lameness has made the worthy farmer unusually cross. I think I must confide the story to my readers.

Gipsies and beggars do not in general much inhabit our neighbourhood; but, about half a mile off, there is a den so convenient for stroll-

ers and vagabonds, that it sometimes tempts the rogues to a few days' sojourn. It is, in truth, nothing more than a deserted brick-kiln, by the side of a lonely lane. But there is something so snug and comfortable in the old building (always keeping in view gipsy notions of comfort;) the blackened walls are so backed by the steep hill on whose side they are built—so fenced from the bleak north-east, and letting in so gaily the pleasant western sun; and the wide rugged impassable lane (used only as a road to the kiln, and with that abandoned) is at once so solitary and deserted, and so close to the inhabited and populous world, that it seems made for a tribe whose prime requisites in a habitation are shelter, privacy, and a vicinity to farm-yards.

Accordingly, about a month ago, a pretty strong encampment, evidently gipsies, took up their abode in the kiln. The party consisted of two or three tall, lean, sinister-looking men, who went about the country mending pots and kettles, and driving a small trade in old iron; one or two children, unnaturally quiet, the spies of the crew; an old woman who sold matches and told fortunes; a young woman, with an infant strapped to her back, who begged; several hungry dogs, and three ragged donkeys. The arrival of these vagabonds spread a general consternation through the village. Gamekeepers and housewives were in equal dismay. Snares were found in the preserves—poultry vanished from the farm-yards—a lamb was lost from the lea—and a damask table-cloth, belonging to the worshipful the Mayor of W——, was abstracted from the drying-ground of Rachel Strong, the most celebrated laundress in these parts, to whom it had been sent for the benefit of country washing. No end to the pilfering and the stories of pilfering! The inhabitants of the kiln were not only thieves in themselves, but the cause of thievery in others. "The gipsies!" was the answer general to every inquiry for things missing.

Farmer Thorpe—whose dwelling, with its variety of outbuildings—barns, ricks, and stables—is only separated by a meadow and a small coppice from the lane that leads to the gipsy retreat—was particularly annoyed by this visitation.—Two couple of full-grown ducks, and a whole brood of early chickens, disappeared in one night; and Mrs. Thorpe fretted over the loss, and the farmer was indignant at the roguery. He set traps, let loose mastiffs, and put in action all the resources of village police—but in vain. Every night, property went; and the culprits, however strongly suspected, still continued unamenable to the law.

At last, one morning, the great chanticleer of the farm-yard—a cock of a million, with an unrivalled crow—a matchless strut, and plumage all gold and green, and orange and purple—gorgeous as a peacock, and fierce as a he-turkey—chanticleer, the pride and glory of the yard, was missing! and Mrs. Thorpe's lamentations and her husband's anger redoubled. Vowing vengeance against the gipsies, he went to the door to survey a young blood mare of his own breeding; and as he stood at the gate—now bemoaning chanticleer—now cursing the gipsies—now admiring the bay filly—his neighbour, dame Simmons—the identical lady of the mop, who occasionally charred at the house—came to give him the comfortable information that she had certainly heard chanticleer—she was quite ready to swear to chanticleer's voice—crowing in the brick-kiln. No time, she added, should be lost, if farmer Thorpe wished to rescue that illustrious cock, and to punish the culprits—since the gipsies, when she passed the place, were preparing to decamp.

No time *was* lost. In one moment farmer Thorpe was on the bay filly's unsaddled back, with the halter for a bridle; and, in the next, they were on full gallop towards the kiln. But, alas! alas! "the more haste the worse speed," says the wisdom of nations. Just as they arrived at the spot from which the procession—gipsies, dogs, and donkeys—and chanticleer in a sack, shrieking most vigorously—were proceeding on their travels, the young blood mare—whether startled at the unusual *cortége*, or the rough ways, or the hideous noise of her old friend, the cock—suddenly reared and threw her master, who lay in all the agony of a sprained ankle, unable to rise from the ground; whilst the whole tribe, with poor chanticleer their prisoner, marched triumphantly past him, utterly regardless of his threats and imprecations. In this plight was the unlucky farmer discovered, about half an hour afterwards, by his wife, the constable, and a party of his own labourers, who came to give him assistance in securing the culprits; of whom, notwithstanding an instant and active search through the neighbourhood, nothing has yet transpired. We shall hardly see them again in these parts, and have almost done talking of them. The village is returned to its old state of order and honesty; the Mayor of W——has replaced his table-cloth, and Mrs. Thorpe her cock: and the poor farmer's lame ankle is all that remains to give token of the gipsies.

Here we are at the turning, which, edging round by the coppice, branches off to their sometime den: the other bend to the right leads up a gentle ascent to the vicarage, and that is our way. How fine a view of the little parsonage we have from hence, between those arching elms, which enclose it like a picture in a frame! and how pretty a picture it forms, with its three pointed roofs, its snug porch, and its casement windows glittering from amid the china roses! What a nest of peace and comfort! Further on, almost at the summit of the hill, stands the old church with its

massy tower—a row of superb lime-trees running along one side of the churchyard, and a cluster of dark yews shading the other. Few country churches have so much to boast in architectural beauty, or in grandeur of situation.

We lose sight of it as we mount the hill, the lane narrowing and winding between deep banks, surmounted by high hedges, excluding all prospects till we reach the front of the vicarage, and catch across the gate of the opposite field a burst of country the most extensive and the most beautiful—field and village, mansion and cot, town and river, all smiling under the sparkling sun of May, and united and harmonized by the profusion of hedge-row timber in its freshest verdure, giving a rich woodland character to the scene, till it is terminated in the distance by the blue line of the Hampshire hills almost melting into the horizon. Such is the view from the vicarage. But it is too sunny and too windy to stand about out of doors, and time to finish our ramble. Down the hill, and round the corner, and past farmer Thorpe's house, and one glance at the wheat-hoers, and then we will go home.

Ah! it is just as I feared. Jem and Mabel have been parted: they are now at opposite sides of the fields—he looking very angry, working rapidly and violently, and doing more harm than good—she looking tolerably sulky, and just moving her hoe, but evidently doing nothing at all. Farmer Thorpe, on his part, is standing in the middle of the field, observing, but pretending not to observe, the little humours of the separated lovers. There is a lurking smile about the corners of his mouth that bespeaks him more amused than angry. He is a kind person after all, and will certainly make no mischief. I should not even wonder if he espoused Jem Tanner's cause; and, for certain, if any one can prevail on the little clerk to give up his squinting favourite in favour of true love, farmer Thorpe is the man.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

Women, fortunately perhaps for their happiness and their virtue, have, as compared with men, so few opportunities of acquiring permanent distinction, that it is rare to find a female unconnected with literature or with history, whose name is remembered after her monument is defaced, and the brass on her coffin-lid corroded. Such, however, was the case with dame Eleanor, the widow of Sir Richard Lacy, whose name, at the end of three centuries, continued to be as freshly and as frequently spoken, as "familiar" a "household word" in the little village of Aberleigh, as if she had flourished there yesterday. Her memory was embalmed by a deed of charity and of goodness. She had founded and endowed a girls' school for "the instruction" (to use the words of the deed) "of twenty poor children, and the maintenance of one discreet and godly matron;" and the school still continued to be called after its foundress, and the very spot on which the school-house stood, to be known by the name of Lady Lacy's Green.

It was a spot worthy of its destination,—a spot of remarkable cheerfulness and beauty. The Green was small, of irregular shape, and situate at a confluence of shady lanes. Half the roads and paths of the parish met there, probably for the convenience of crossing in that place, by a stone bridge of one arch covered with ivy, the winding rivulet which intersected the whole village, and which, sweeping in a narrow channel round the school garden, widened into a stream of some consequence, in the richly-wooded meadows beyond. The banks of the brook, as it wound its glittering course over the green, were set, here and there, with clumps of forest trees, chiefly bright green elms, and aspens with their quivering leaves and their pale shining bark; whilst a magnificent beech stood alone near the gate leading to the school, partly overshadowing the little court in which the house was placed. The building itself was a beautiful small structure, in the ornamented style of Elizabeth's day, with pointed roofs and pinnacles, and clustered chimneys, and casement windows; the whole house enwreathed and garlanded by a most luxuriant vine. The date of the erection, 1563, was cut in a stone inserted in the brickwork above the porch; but the foundress had, with an unostentatious modesty, withheld her name; leaving it, as she safely might, to the grateful recollection of the successive generations who profited by her benevolence. Altogether it was a most gratifying scene to the eye and to the heart. No one ever saw Lady Lacy's school-house without admiration, especially in the play-hour at noon, when the children, freed from "restraint that sweetens liberty," were clustered under the old beech-tree, revelling in their innocent freedom, running, jumping, shouting, and laughing with all their might; the only sort of riot which it is pleasant to witness. The painter and the philanthropist might contemplate that scene with equal delight.

The right of appointing both the mistress and the scholars had been originally vested in the Lacy family, to whom nearly the whole of the parish at one time belonged. But the estates, the manor, the hall-house, had long passed into other hands and other names, and this privilege of charity was now the only possession which the heirs of Lady Lacy retained in Aberleigh. Reserving to themselves the right of nominating the matron, her descendants had therefore delegated to the vicar

and the parish officers the selection of the children and the general regulation of the school—a sort of council of regency, which, for as simple and as peaceful as the government seems, a disputatious churchwarden, or a sturdy overseer, would sometimes contrive to render sufficiently stormy. I have known as much canvassing and almost as much ill-will in a contested election for one of Lady Lacy's scholarships, as for a scholarship in grander places, or even for an M. P.-ship in the next borough; and the great schism between the late Farmer Brookes and all his co-adjutors, as to whether the original uniform of little green stuff gowns, with white bibs and aprons, tippets, and mob, should be commuted for modern cotton frocks and cottage bonnets, fairly set the parish by the ears.—Owing to the good farmer's glorious obstinacy (which I suppose he called firmness), the green-gownians lost the day. I believe that, as a matter of calculation, the man might be right, and that his costume was cheaper and more convenient; but I am sure that I should have been against him, right or wrong; the other dress was so pretty, so primitive, so neat, so becoming; the little lasses looked like rose-buds in the midst of their leaves: besides, it was the old traditionary dress—the dress contrived and approved by Lady Lacy. —Oh! it should never have been changed, never!

Since there was so much contention in the election of pupils, it was, perhaps, lucky for the vestry that the exercise of the more splendid piece of patronage, the appointment of a mistress, did not enter into its duties. Mr. Lacy, the representative of the foundress, a man of fortune in a distant county, generally bestowed the situation on some old dependant of his family. During the churchwardenship of Farmer Brookes, no less than three village gouvernantes arrived at Aberleigh—a quick succession! It made more than half the business of our zealous and bustling man of office, an amateur in such matters, to instruct and overlook them. The first importation was Dame Whitaker, a person of no small importance, who had presided as head nurse over two generations of the Lacys, and was now, on the dispersion of the last set of her nurslings to their different schools, and an unlucky quarrel with a favourite lady's maid, promoted and banished to this distant government.—Nobody could be more unfit for her new station, or better suited to her old. She was a nurse from top to toe. Round, portly, smiling, with a coaxing voice, and an indolent manner; much addicted to snuff and green tea, to sitting still, to telling long stories, and to humouring children. She spoiled every brat she came near, just as she had been used to spoil the little Master Edwards and Miss Julias of her ancient dominions. She could not have scolded if she would—the gift was not in her. Under her misrule the school grew into sad disorder; the girls not only learnt nothing, but unlearnt what they knew before; work was lost—even the new shifts of the Vicar's lady; books were torn; and, for the climax of evil, no sampler was prepared to carry round at Christmas, from house to house—the first time such an omission had occurred within the memory of man. Farmer Brookes was at his wit's end. He visited the school six days in the week, to admonish and reprove; he even went nigh to threaten that he would work a sampler himself; and finally bestowed on the unfortunate ex-nurse, the nickname of Queen Log, a piece of disrespect, which, together with other grievances, proved so annoying to poor Dame Whitaker, that she found the air of Aberleigh disagree with her, patched up a peace with her old enemy, the lady's maid, abdicated that unruly and rebellious principality, the school, and retired with great delight to her quiet home in the deserted nursery, where, as far as I know, she still remains.

The grief of the children on losing this most indulgent non-instructress, was not mitigated by the appearance or demeanour of her successor, who at first seemed a preceptress after Farmer Brookes's own heart, a perfect Queen Stork. Dame Banks was the widow of Mr. Lacy's game-keeper; a little thin woman, with a hooked nose, a sharp voice, and a prodigious activity of tongue. She scolded all day long; and for the first week passed for a great teacher. After that time it began to be discovered, that, in spite of her lessons, the children did not learn; notwithstanding her rating they did not mind, and in the midst of a continual bustle, nothing was ever done. Dame Banks was in fact a well-intentioned, worthy woman, with a restless irritable temper, a strong desire to do her duty, and a woful ignorance how to set about it. She was rather too old to be taught either; at least she required a gentler instructor than the good churchwarden; and so much ill-will was springing up between them, that he had even been heard to regret the loss of Dame Whitaker's quietness, when very suddenly poor Dame Banks fell ill and died. The sword had worn the scabbard; but she was better than she seemed; a thoroughly well-meaning woman—grateful, pious, and charitable; even our man of office admitted this.

The next in succession was one with whom my trifling pen, dearly as that light and fluttering instrument loves to dally and disport over the surfaces of things, must take no saucy freedom; one of whom we all felt it impossible to speak or to think without respect; one who made Farmer Brookes's office of adviser a sinecure, by putting the whole school, himself included, into its proper place, setting every body in order, and keeping them so. I don't know how she managed, unless by good

sense and good-humour, and that happy art of government, which seems no art at all, because it is so perfect; but the children were busy and happy, the vestry pleased, and the churchwarden contented. All went well under Mrs. Allen.

She was an elderly woman, nearer perhaps to seventy than to sixty, and of an exceedingly venerable and prepossessing appearance. Delicacy was her chief characteristic—a delicacy so complete that it pervaded her whole person, from her tall, slender figure, her fair, faded complexion, and her silver hair to the exquisite nicety of dress by which, at all hours and seasons, from Sunday morning to Saturday night, she was invariably distinguished. The soil of the day was never seen on her apparel; dust would not cling to her snowy caps and handkerchiefs: such was the art magic of her neatness. Her very pins did their office in a different manner from those belonging to other people. Her manner was gentle, cheerful, and courteous, with a simplicity and propriety of expression that perplexed all listeners; it seemed so exactly what belongs to the highest birth and the highest breeding. She was humble, very humble; but her humility was evidently the result of a truly Christian spirit, and would equally have distinguished her in any station. The poor people, always nice judges of behaviour, felt, they did not know why, that she was their superior; the gentry of the neighbourhood suspected her of being their equal — some clergyman's or officer's widow, reduced in circumstances; and would have treated her as such, had she not, on discovering their mistake, eagerly undeceived them. She had been, she said, all her life a servant, the personal attendant of one dear mistress, on whose decease she had been recommended to Mr. Lacy; and to his kindness, under Providence, was indebted for a home and a provision for her helpless age, and the still more helpless youth of a poor orphan, far dearer to her than herself. This avowal, although it changed the character of the respect paid to Mrs. Allen, was certainly not calculated to diminish its amount; and the new mistress of Lady Lacy's school, and the beautiful order of her house and garden, continued to be the pride and admiration of Aberleigh.

The orphan of whom she spoke was a little girl about eleven years old, who lived with her, and whose black frock bespoke the recent death of some relative. She had lately, Mrs. Allen said, lost her grandmother—her only remaining parent, and had now no friend but herself on earth; but there was One above who was a Father to the fatherless, and He would protect poor Jane! And as she said this, there was a touch of emotion, a break of the voice, a tremour on the lip, very unlike the usual cheerfulness and self-command of her manner. The child was evidently very dear to her. Jane was, indeed, a most interesting creature: not pretty—a girl of that age seldom is; the beauty of childhood is outgrown, that of youth not come; and Jane could scarcely ever have had any other pretensions to prettiness, than the fine expression of her dark grey eyes, and the general sweetness of her countenance. She was pale, thin, and delicate; serious and thoughtful far beyond her years; averse from play, and shrinking from notice. Her fondness for Mrs. Allen, and her constant and unremitting attention to her health and comforts, were peculiarly remarkable. Every part of their small housewifery, that her height and strength and skill would enable her to perform, she insisted on doing, and many things far beyond her power she attempted. Never was so industrious or so handy a little maiden. Old Nelly Chun, the char-woman, who went once a week to the house, to wash and bake and scour, declared that Jane did more than herself; and to all who knew Nelly's opinion of her own doings, this praise appeared superlative.

In the school-room she was equally assiduous, not as a learner, but as a teacher. None so clever as Jane in superintending the different exercises of the needle, the spelling-book, and the slate. From the little work-woman's first attempt to insert thread into a pocket handkerchief, that digging and ploughing of cambric, miscalled hemming, up to the nice and delicate mysteries of stitching and buttonholing; from the easy junction of *a b*, *ab*, and *b a*, *ba*, to that tremendous sesquipedalian word *irrefragibility*, at which even I tremble as I write; from the Numeration Table to Practice, nothing came amiss to her. In figures she was particularly quick. Generally speaking, her patience with the other children, however dull or tiresome or giddy they might be, was exemplary; but a false accomptant, a stupid arithmetician, would put her out of humour. The only time I ever heard her sweet, gentle voice raised a note above its natural key, was in reprimanding Susan Wheeler, a sturdy, square-made, rosy-cheeked lass, as big again as herself, the dunce and beauty of the school, who had three times cast up a sum of three figures, and three times made the total wrong. Jane ought to have admired the ingenuity evinced by such a variety of error; but she did not; it fairly put her in a passion. She herself was not only clever in figures, but fond of them to an extraordinary degree—luxuriated in Long Division, and revelled in the Rule-of-Three. Had she been a boy, she would probably have been a great mathematician, and have won that fickle, fleeting, shadowy wreath, that crown made of the rainbow, that vainest of all earthly pleasures, but which yet *is* a pleasure—Fame.

Happier, far happier, was the good, the lowly, the pious child, in her humble duties! Grave and quiet as she seemed, she had many moments of intense and placid enjoyment,

when the duties of the day were over, and she sat reading in the porch, by the side of Mrs. Allen, or walked with her in the meadows on a Sunday evening after church. Jane was certainly contented and happy; and yet every one that saw her, thought of her with that kind of interest which is akin to pity. There was a pale, fragile grace about her, such as we sometimes see in a rose which has blown in the shade; or rather, to change the simile, the drooping and delicate look of a tender plant removed from a hot-house to the open air. We could not help feeling sure (notwithstanding our mistake with regard to Mrs. Allen) that *this* was indeed a transplanted flower; and that the village school, however excellently her habits had become inured to her situation, was not her proper atmosphere.

Several circumstances corroborated our suspicions. My lively young friend Sophia Grey, standing with me one day at the gate of the school-house, where I had been talking with Mrs. Allen, remarked to me, in French, the sly, demure vanity, with which Susan Wheeler, whose beauty had attracted her attention, was observing and returning her glances. The playful manner in which Sophia described Susan's "regard furtif," made me smile; and looking accidentally at Jane, I saw that she was smiling too, clearly comprehending, and enjoying the full force of the pleasantry. She must understand French; and when questioned, she confessed she did, and thankfully accepted the loan of books in that language. Another time, being sent on a message to the vicarage, and left for some minutes alone in the parlour, with a piano standing open in the room, she could not resist the temptation of touching the keys, and was discovered playing an air of Mozart, with great taste and execution. At this detection she blushed, as if caught in a crime, and hurried away in tears and without her message. It was clear that she had once learnt music. But the surest proof that Jane's original station had been higher than that which she now filled, was the mixture of respect and fondness with which Mrs. Allen treated her, and the deep regret she sometimes testified at seeing her employed in any menial office.

At last, elicited by some warm praise of the charming child, our good schoolmistress disclosed her story. Jane Mowbray was the grand-daughter of the lady in whose service Mrs. Allen had passed her life. Her father had been a man of high family and splendid fortune; had married beneath himself, as it was called, a friendless orphan, with no portion but beauty and virtue; and, on her death, which followed shortly on the birth of her daughter, had plunged into every kind of vice and extravagance. What need to tell a tale of sin and suffering? Mr. Mowbray had ruined himself, had ruined all belonging to him, and finally had joined our armies abroad as a volunteer, and had fallen undistinguished in his first battle. The news of his death was fatal to his indulgent mother; and when she too died, Mrs. Allen blessed the Providence which, by throwing in her way a recommendation to Lady Lacy's school, had enabled her to support the dear object of her mistress's love and prayers. "Had Miss Mowbray no connections?" was the natural question. "Yes; one very near,—an aunt, the sister of her father, richly married in India. But Sir William was a proud and a stern man, upright in his own conduct, and implacable to error. Lady Ely was a sweet, gentle creature, and doubtless would be glad to extend a mother's protection to the orphan; but Sir William—Oh! he was so unrelenting! He had abjured Mr. Mowbray, and all connected with him. She had written to inform them where the dear child was, but had no expectation of any answer from India."

Time verified this prediction. The only tidings from India, at all interesting to Jane Mowbray, were contained in the paragraph of a newspaper which announced lady Ely's death, and put an end to all hopes of protection in that quarter. Years passed on, and found her still with Mrs. Allen at Lady Lacy's Green, more and more beloved and respected from day to day. She had now attained almost to womanhood. Strangers, I believe, called her plain; we, who knew her, thought her pretty. Her figure was tall and straight as a cypress, pliant and flexible as a willow, full of gentle grace, whether in repose or in motion. She had a profusion of light brown hair, a pale complexion, dark grey eyes, a smile of which the character was rather sweet than gay, and such a countenance! no one could look at her without wishing her well, or without being sure that she deserved all good wishes. Her manners were modest and elegant, and she had much of the self-taught knowledge, which is, of all knowledge, the surest and the best, because acquired with most difficulty, and fixed in the memory, by the repetition of effort. Every one had assisted her to the extent of his power, and of her willingness to accept assistance; for both she and Mrs. Allen had a pride—call it independence—which rendered it impossible, even to the friends who were most honoured by their good opinion, to be as useful to them as they could have wished. To give Miss Mowbray time for improvement had, however, proved a powerful emollient to the pride of our dear schoolmistress; and that time had been so well employed, that her acquirements were considerable; whilst in mind and character she was truly admirable; mild, grateful, and affectionate, and imbued with a deep religious feeling, which influenced every action and pervaded every thought. So gifted, she was deemed by her constant friends, the vicar and his lady, perfectly competent to the

care and education of children; it was agreed that she should enter a neighbouring family, as a successor to their then governess, early in the ensuing spring; and she, although sad at the prospect of leaving her aged protectress, acquiesced in their decision.

One fine Sunday in the October preceding this dreaded separation, as Miss Mowbray, with Mrs. Allen leaning on her arm, was slowly following the little train of Lady Lacy's scholars from church, an elderly gentleman, sickly-looking and emaciated, accosted a pretty young woman, who was loitering with some other girls at the church-yard gate, and asked her several questions respecting the school and its mistress. Susan Wheeler (for it happened to be our old acquaintance) was delighted to be singled out by so grand a gentleman, and being a kind-hearted creature in the main, spoke of the school-house and its inhabitants exactly as they deserved. "Mrs. Allen," she said, "was the best woman in the world—the very best, except just Miss Mowbray, who was better still,—only too particular about summing, which you know, sir," added Susan, "people can't learn if they can't. She is going to be a governess in the spring," continued the loquacious damsel; "and it's to be hoped the little ladies will take kindly to their tables, or it will be a sad grievance to Miss Jane."—"A governess! Where can I make inquiries concerning Miss Mowbray?" —"At the vicarage, sir," answered Susan, dropping her little curtsy, and turning away, well pleased with the gentleman's condescension, and with half-a-crown which he had given her in return for her intelligence. The stranger, meanwhile, walked straight to the vicarage; and in less than half an hour the vicar repaired with him to Lady Lacy's Green.

This stranger, so drooping, so sickly, so emaciated, was the proud Indian uncle, the stern Sir William Ely! Sickness and death had been busy with him and his. He had lost his health, his wife, and his children; and, softened by affliction, was returned to England a new man, anxious to forgive and to be forgiven, and, above all, desirous to repair his neglect and injustice towards the only remaining relative of the wife whom he had so fondly loved and so tenderly lamented. In this frame of mind, such a niece as Jane Mowbray was welcomed with no common joy. His delight in her, and his gratitude towards her protectress, were unbounded. He wished them both to accompany him home, and reside with him constantly. Jane promised to do so; but Mrs. Allen, with her usual admirable feeling of propriety, clung to the spot which had been to her a "city of refuge," and refused to leave it in spite of all the entreaties of uncle and of niece. It was a happy decision for Aberleigh; for what could Aberleigh have done without its good schoolmistress?

She lives there still, its ornament and its pride; and every year Jane Mowbray comes for a long visit, and makes a holiday in the school and in the whole place. Jane Mowbray, did I say? No! not Jane Mowbray now. She has changed that dear name for the only name that could be dearer:—she is married—married to the eldest son of Mr. Lacy, the lineal representative of Dame Eleanor Lacy, the honoured foundress of the school. It was in a voice tremulous more from feeling than from age, that Mrs. Allen welcomed the young heir, when he brought his fair bride to Aberleigh; and it was with a yet stronger and deeper emotion that the bridegroom, with his own Jane in his hand, visited the asylum which she and her venerable guardian owed to the benevolence and the piety of his ancestress, whose good deeds had thus showered down blessings on her remote posterity.

FANNY'S FAIRINGS.

A happy boy was Thomas Stokes, the blacksmith's son, of Upton Lea, last May morning: he was to go to B—— fair, with his eldest brother William, and his cousin Fanny; and he never closed his eyes all night for thinking of the pleasure he should enjoy on the morrow. Thomas, for shortness called "Tom," was a lively, merry boy of nine years old, rising ten, as the horse-dealers say, and had never been at a fair in his life; so that his sleeplessness as well as the frequent soliloquies of triumphant ho! ho! (his usual exclamation when highly pleased,) and the perpetual course of broad smiles in which his delight had been vented for a week before, were nothing remarkable. His companions were as wakeful and happy as himself. Now that might be accounted for in his cousin's case, since it was also her first fair; for Fanny, a pretty dark-eyed lass of eighteen, was a Londoner, and, till she arrived that winter on a visit to her aunt, had never been out of the sound of bow-bell; but why William, a young blacksmith of one-and-twenty, to whom fairs were almost as familiar as horse-shoes, why he should lose his sleep on the occasion is less easy to discover—perhaps from sympathy. Through Tom's impatience the party were early astir; indeed, he had roused the whole house long before daybreak; and betimes in the forenoon they set forth on their progress;—Tom in a state of spirits that caused him to say, Ho! ho! every minute, and much endangered the new hat that he was tossing in the air; William and Fanny, with a more concentrated and far quieter joy. One should not see a finer young couple: he, decked in his Sunday attire, tall, sturdy, and mus-

cular, with a fine open countenance, and an air of rustic gallantry that became him well; she, pretty and modest, with a look of gentility about her plain dark gown and cottage bonnet, and the little straw basket that she carried in her hand, which even more than her ignorance of tree and bird, and leaf and flower, proclaimed her town breeding;—although that ignorance was such, that Tom declared that on her first arrival at Upton Lea, she did not know an oak from an elm, or a sparrow from a blackbird. Tom himself had yet to learn poor Fanny's excuses, how much oaks and elms resemble each other in the London air, and how very closely in colour, though not in size, a city sparrow approaches to a blackbird.

Their way led through pleasant footpaths; every bank covered with cowslips and bluebells, and overhung with the budding hawthorn, and the tasselled hazel; now between orchards, whose trees, one flush of blossom, rose from amidst beds of daffodils, with their dark weaving spear-like leaves and golden flowers; now along fields, newly sown with barley, where the doves and wood-pigeons, pretty innocent thieves, were casting a glancing shadow on the ground as they flew from furrow to furrow, picking up the freshly planted grain; and now between close lanes peopled with nightingales; until at last they emerged into the gay high road, where their little party fell into the flood of people pouring on to the fair, much after the manner in which a tributary brooklet is lost in the waters of some mighty stream.

A mingled stream in good sooth it was, a most motley procession! Country folks in all varieties, from the pink-ribboned maiden, the belle of her parish, tripping along so merrily, to the sober and demure village matron, who walked beside her with a slow lagging pace, as if tired already; from the gay Lothario of the hamlet, with his clean smock-frock, and his hat on one side, who strutted along, ogling the lass in the pink ribbons, to the "grave and reverend seignor," the patriarch of the peasantry, with his straight white hair, and his well-preserved wedding-suit, who hobbled stoopingly on, charged with two great-grandchildren—a sprightly girl of six lugging him forward, a lumpish boy of three dragging him back. Children were there of all conditions, from "mamma's darlings," in the coronet carriage—the little lords and ladies, to whom a fair was, as yet, only a "word of power," down to the brown gipsy urchins strapped on their mother's back, to whom it was a familiar sight—no end to the children! no end to the grown people! no end to the vehicles! Carts crammed as full as they could be stowed, gigs with one, two, three, and four inside passengers; wagons laden with men instead of corn; droves of pigs; flocks of sheep; herds of cattle; strings of horses; with their several drovers and drivers of all kinds and countries—English, Irish, Welsh, and Scotch—all bound for the fair.—Here an Italian boy with his tray of images; there a Savoyard with her hurdy-gurdy; and, lastly, struggling through the midst of the throng, that painful minister of pleasure, an itinerant showman, with his box of puppets and his tawdry wife, pushing and toiling, and straining every nerve for fear of being too late. No end to the people! no end to the din! The turnpike-man opened his gate and shut his ears in despairing resignation. Never was known so full a May-fair.

And amongst the thousands assembled in the market-place at B—— it would have been difficult to find a happier group than our young cousins. Tom, to be sure, had been conscious of a little neglect on the part of his companions. The lectures on ornithology, with which, chemin faisant, he had thought fit to favour Fanny (children do dearly love to teach grown people, and all country boys are learned in birds,) had been rather thrown away on that fair damsel. William and she had walked arm-in-arm; and when he tried to join them on one side, he found himself cast off,—and when on the other, let go. Poor Tom was, evidently, de-trop in the party. However, he bore the affront like a philosopher, and soon forgot his grievances in the solid luxuries of tarts and gingerbread; in the pleasant business of purchasing and receiving petty presents; in the chatter, the bustle, and the merriment of the fair. Amidst all his delight, however, he could not but feel a little curiosity, when William having lured him to a stall, and fixed him there in the interesting occupation of selecting a cricket-ball, persuaded Fanny to go under his escort to make some private purchases at the neighbouring shops. Tom's attention to his own important bargain was sadly distracted by watching his companions as they proceeded from the linen-drapers to the jewellers, and from the jewellers to the pastry-cooks; looking, the whilst, the one proud and happy, the other shy and ashamed. Tom could not tell what to make of it, and chose, in his perplexity, the very worst ball that was offered to him; but as he had seen their several parcels snugly deposited in the straw basket, he summoned courage to ask, point blank, what it contained; at which question, Fanny blushed, and William laughed; and on a repetition of the inquiry answered, with an arch smile—"Fanny's fairings." Now as Fanny had before purchased toys, and cakes, and such like trifles, for the whole family, this reply and the air with which it was delivered, served rather to stimulate than to repress the vague suspicions that were floating in the boy's brain. A crowd, however, is no place for impertinent curiosity. Loneliness and ennui are necessary to the growth of that weed. If there had been a fair in Bluebeard's castle, his wives would have

kept their heads on their shoulders; the blue chamber and the diamond key would have tempted in vain. So Tom betook himself to the enjoyment of the scene before him, applying himself the more earnestly to the business of pleasure, as they were to return to Upton Lea at four o'clock.

Four o'clock arrived, and found our hero, Thomas Stokes, still untired of stuffing and staring. He had eaten more cakes, oranges, and gingerbread, than the gentlest reader would deem credible; and he had seen well nigh all the sights of the fair;—the tall man, and the short woman, and the calf with two heads; had attended the in-door horsemanship and the out-door play; the dancing dogs and two raree-shows; and lastly, had visited and admired the wonders of the menagerie, scraped acquaintance with a whole legion of parrots and monkeys, poked up a boa-constrictor, patted a lioness, and had the honour of presenting his blunderbuss to the elephant, although he was not much inclined to boast of this exploit, having been so frightened at his own temerity, as to run away out of the booth before the sagacious but deliberate quadruped had found time to fire.

Not a whit tired was Tom. He could have wished the fair to last a week. Nevertheless, he obeyed his brother's summons; and the little party set out on their return, the two elder ones again linked arm-in-arm, and apparently forgetting that the world contained any human being except their own two selves. Poor Tom trudged after, beginning to feel, in the absence of other excitement, a severe relapse of his undefined curiosity, respecting Fanny's fairings. On tripped William and Fanny, and after trudged Tom, until a string of unruly horses passing rapidly by, threw the whole group into confusion: no one was hurt; but the pretty Londoner was so much alarmed as to afford her companion ample employment in placing her on a bank, soothing her fears, and railing at the misconduct of the horse-people. As the cavalcade disappeared, the fair damsel recovered her spirits, and began to inquire for her basket, which she had dropped in her terror, and for Tom, who was also missing. They were not far to seek. Perched in the opposite hedge sat master Tom, in the very act of satisfying his curiosity by examining her basket, smiling and ho! ho!-ing with all his might. Parcel after parcel did he extract and unfold:—first a roll of white satin ribbon—"ho! ho!"—then a pair of white cambric gloves—"ho! ho!" again;—then a rich-looking, dark-coloured, small plum-cake, nicely frosted with white sugar,—"ho! ho! Miss Fanny!"—last of all a plain gold ring wrapped in three papers, silver, white, and brown,—"ho, ho! once more shouted the boy, twirling the wedding-ring on his own red finger, the fourth of the left hand,—"so these are Fanny's fairings! Ho! ho!—ho! ho!"

THE CHALK-PIT.

One of the most admirable persons whom I have ever known, is my friend Mrs. Mansfield, the wife of the good vicar of Aberleigh. Her daughters are just what might be expected from girls trained under such a mother. Of Clary, the youngest, I have spoken elsewhere. Ellen, the elder sister, is as delightful a piece of sunshine and gaiety as ever gladdened a country home. One never thinks whether she is pretty, there is such a play of feature, such a light in her dark eye, such an alternation of blush and smile on her animated countenance; for Ellen has her mother's trick of blushing, although her "eloquent blood" speaks through the medium of a richer and browner skin. One forgets to make up one's mind as to her prettiness; but it is quite certain that she is charming.

She has, in the very highest degree, those invaluable every-day spirits which require no artificial stimuli, no public amusements, no company, no flattery, no praise. Her sprightliness is altogether domestic. Her own dear family, and a few dear friends, are all the listeners she ever thinks of. No one doubts but Ellen might be a wit, if she would: she is saved from that dangerous distinction as much by natural modesty as by a kind and constant consideration for the feelings of others. I have often seen a repartee flashing and laughing in her bright eyes, but seldom, very seldom, heard it escape her lips; never unless quite equally matched and challenged to such a bout of "bated foils" by some admirer of her playful conversation. They who have themselves that splendid but delusive talent, can best estimate the merit of such forbearance. Governed as it is in her, it makes the delight of the house, and supplies perpetual amusement to herself and to all about her.

Another of her delightful and delighting amusements, is her remarkable skill in drawing flowers. I have never seen any portraits so exactly resembling the originals, as her carnations and geraniums. If they could see themselves in her paintings, they might think that it was their own pretty selves in their looking-glass, the water. One reason for this wonderful verisimilitude is, that our fair artist never flatters the flowers that sit to her; never puts leaves that ought to be there, but are not there, never makes them hold up their heads unreasonably, or places them in an attitude, or forces them into a group. Just as they are, she sets them down; and if she does make any slight deviation from her models, she is so well acquainted with their persons and habits, that all is in keeping; you feel that so the plant might have looked. By the way, I do not know any accomplishment that I would more earnestly recommend to my young friends than this of flower-painting. It is a most quiet, unpretending, womanly employment; a great

amusement within doors, and a constant pleasure without. The enjoyment of a country walk is much enhanced when the checkered fritillary or the tinted wood anemone are to be sought, and found, and gathered, and made our own; and the dear domestic spots haunted by

"Retired leisure,
Who in trim gardens takes his pleasure,"

are doubly gardens when the dahlias and china-asters, after flourishing there for their little day, are to re-blossom on paper. Then it supplies such pretty keepsakes, the uncostly remembrances which are so pleasant to give and to take; and, above all, it fosters and sharpens the habit of observation and the love of truth. How much of what is excellent in art, in literature, in conversation, and in conduct, is comprised in that little word!

Ellen had great delight in comparing our Sylvan Flora with the minute and fairy blossoms of the South Downs, where she had passed the greater part of her life. She could not but admit the superior luxuriance and variety of our woodland plants, and yet she had a good deal to say in favour of the delicate, flowery carpet, which clothes the green hills of Sussex; and in fact was on that point of honour a little jealous—a little, a very little, the least in the world, touchy. She loved her former abode, the abode of childhood, with enthusiasm; the downs; the sea, whose sound as she said seemed to follow her to her inland home, to dwell within her as it does in the folds of the sea-shell; and, above all, she loved her old neighbours, high and low. I do not know whether Mrs. Mansfield or her daughters returned oftenest to the "simple annals of the *Sussex* poor." It was a subject of which they never wearied; and we to whom they came, liked them the more for their clinging and lingering affection for those whom they had left. We received it as a pledge of what they would feel for us when we became better acquainted,—a pledge which has been amply redeemed. I flatter myself that Aberleigh now almost rivals their dear old parish; only that Clara, who has been here three years, and is now eighteen, says, very gravely, that "people as they grow old, cannot be expected to form the very strong local attachments which they did when they were young." I wonder how old Clara will think herself when she comes to be eight-and-twenty?

Between Ellen's stories and her mother's there is usually a characteristic difference; those of the one being merry, those of the other grave. One occurrence, however, was equally impressed on the mind of either. I shall try to tell it as shortly and simply as it was told to me; but it will want the charm of Mrs. Mansfield's touching voice, and of Ellen's glistening eyes.

Toward the bottom of one of the green hills of the parish of Lanton, was a large deserted chalk-pit; a solemn and ghastly-looking place, blackened in one part by an old lime-kiln, whose ruinous fragments still remained, and in others mossy and weather-stained, and tinted with every variety of colour—green, yellow, and brown. The excavation extended far within the sides of the hill, and the edges were fringed by briar and bramble and ivy, contrasting strongly with the smooth, level verdure of the turf above, whilst plants of a ranker growth, nettles, docks, and fumatory, sprang up beneath, adding to the wildness and desolation of the scene. The road that led by the pit was little frequented. The place had an evil name; none cared to pass it even in the glare of the noon-day sun; and the villagers would rather go a mile about than catch a glimpse of it when the pale moonlight brought into full relief those cavernous white walls, and the dark briars and ivy waved fitfully in the night wind. It was a vague and shuddering feeling. None knew why he feared, or what; but the awe and the avoidance were general, and the owls and the bats remained in undisturbed possession of Lanton chalk-pit.

One October day, the lively work of ploughing, and wheat-sowing, and harrowing, was going on all at once in a great field just beyond the dreaded spot: a pretty and an interesting scene, especially on sloping ground, and under a gleaming sun throwing an ever-shifting play of light and shadow over the landscape. Towards noon, however, the clouds began to gather, and one of the tremendous pelting showers, peculiar to the coast, came suddenly on. Seedsmen, ploughmen, and carters, hastened home with their team, leaving the boys to follow; and they, five in number, set out at their fullest speed. The storm increased apace; and it was evident that their thin jackets and old smock-frocks would be drenched through and through long before they could reach Lanton Great Farm. In this dilemma, James Goddard, a stout lad of fifteen, the biggest and boldest of the party, proposed to take shelter in the chalk-pit. Boys are naturally thoughtless and fearless; the real inconvenience was more than enough to counterbalance the imaginary danger, and they all willingly adopted the plan, except one timid child, eight years old, who shrunk and hung back.

Harry Lee was a widow's son. His father, a fisherman, had perished at sea, a few months after the birth of this only child; and his mother, a fond and delicate woman, had reared him delicately and fondly, beyond her apparent means. Night and day had she laboured for her poor Harry; and nothing but a long illness and the known kindness of the farmer in whose service he was placed, had induced her to part with him at so early an age.

Harry was, indeed, a sweet and gracious boy, noticed by every stranger for his gentleness and beauty. He had a fair, blooming,

open countenance, large, mild, blue eyes, which seemed to ask kindness in every glance; and a quantity of shining, light hair, curling in ringlets round his neck. He was the best reader in Mrs. Mansfield's Sunday-school; and only the day before, Miss Clara had given him a dinner to carry home to his mother, in reward of his proficiency: indeed, although they tried to conceal it, Harry was the decided favourite of both the young ladies. James Goddard, under whom he worked, and to whose care he had been tearfully committed by the widow Lee, was equally fond of him, in a rougher way; and in the present instance, seeing the delicate boy shivering between cold and fear at the outside of the pit, (for the same constitutional timidity which prevented his entering, hindered him from going home by himself,) he caught him up in his arms, brought him in, and deposited him in the snuggest recess, on a heap of dry chalk. "Well, Harry, is not this better than standing in the wet?" said he kindly, sitting down by his protegé, and sharing with him a huge luncheon of bread and cheese; and the poor child smiled in his face, thanked him, and kissed him as he had been used to kiss his mother.

Half an hour had passed away in boyish talk, and still the storm continued. At last James Goddard thought that he heard a strange and unaccustomed sound, as of bursting or cracking—an awful and indescribable sound—low, and yet distinctly audible, although the wind and rain were raging, and the boys loud in mirth and laughter. He seemed to feel the sound, as he said afterwards; and was just about to question his companions if they too heard that unearthly noise; when a horseman passed along the road, making signs to them and shouting. His words were drowned in the tempest; James rushed out to inquire his meaning, and in that moment the side of the chalk-pit fell in! He heard a crash and a scream—the death scream!—felt his back grazed by the descending mass; and turning round, saw the hill rent, as by an earthquake, and the excavation which had sheltered them, filled, piled, heaped up, by the still quivering and gigantic fragments—no vestige left to tell where it was, or where his wretched companions lay buried!

"Harry! Harry! the child! the child!" was his first thought and his first exclamation; "Help! instant help!" was the next, and, assisted by the stranger horseman, whose speed had been stayed by the awful catastrophe, the village of Lanton was quickly alarmed, and its inhabitants assembled on the spot. Who may describe that scene? Fathers, brothers, kinsmen, friends, digging literally for life! every nerve quivering with exertion, and yet all exertion felt to be unavailing. Mothers and sisters looking on in agony; and the poor widow Lee, and poor, poor, James Goddard, the self-accuser! A thousand and a thousand times did he crave pardon of that distracted mother, for the peril—the death of her son; for James felt that there could be no hope for the helpless child, and tears, such as no personal calamity could have drawn from the strong-hearted lad, fell fast for his fate. Hour after hour the men of Lanton laboured, and all was in vain. The mass seemed impenetrable, inexhaustible. Toward sunset one boy appeared, crushed and dead; another, who showed some slight signs of life, and who still lives, a cripple; a third dead; and then, last of all, Harry Lee. Alas! only by his raiment could that fond mother know her child! His death must have been instantaneous. She did not linger long. The three boys were interred together in Lanton churchyard on the succeeding Sabbath; and before the end of the year, the widow Lee was laid by her son.

WHITSUN-EVE.

The pride of my heart and the delight of my eyes is my garden. Our house, which is in dimensions very much like a bird-cage, and might, with almost equal convenience, be laid on a shelf, or hung up in a tree, would be utterly unbearable in warm weather, were it not that we have a retreat out of doors,—and a very pleasant retreat it is. To make my readers fully comprehend it, I must describe our whole territories.

Fancy a small plot of ground, with a pretty low irregular cottage at one end; a large granary, divided from the dwelling by a little court running along one side; and a long thatched shed open towards the garden, and supported by wooden pillars on the other. The bottom is bounded, half by an old wall, and half by an old paling, over which we see a pretty distance of woody hills. The house, granary, wall and paling, are covered with vines, cherry-trees, roses, honeysuckles, and jessamines, with great clusters of tall hollyhocks running up between them; a large elder overhanging the little gate, and a magnificent bay-tree, such a tree as shall scarcely be matched in these parts, breaking with its beautiful conical form the horizontal lines of the buildings. This is my garden; and the long pillared shed, the sort of rustic arcade which runs along one side, parted from the flower-beds by a row of rich geraniums, is our out-of-door drawing-room.

I know nothing so pleasant as to sit there on a summer afternoon, with the western sun flickering through the great elder-tree, and lighting up our gay parterres, where flowers and flowering shrubs are set as thick as grass in a field, a wilderness of blossom, interwoven, intertwined, wreathy, garlandy, profuse beyond all profusion, where we may guess

that there is such a thing as mould, but never see it. I know nothing so pleasant as to sit in the shade of that dark bower, with the eye resting on that bright piece of colour, lighted so gloriously by the evening sun, now catching a glimpse of the little birds as they fly rapidly in and out of their nests — for there are always two or three birds'-nests in the thick tapestry of cherry-trees, honeysuckles, and China-roses, which cover our walls—now tracing the gay gambols of the common butterflies as they sport around the dahlias; now watching that rarer moth, which the country people, fertile in pretty names, call the bee-bird;* that bird-like insect, which flutters in the hottest days over the sweetest flowers, inserting its long proboscis into the small tube of the jessamine, and hovering over the scarlet blossoms of the geranium, whose bright colour seems reflected on its own feathery breast; that insect which seems so thoroughly a creature of the air, never at rest; always, even when feeding, self-poised, and self-supported, and whose wings, in their ceaseless motion, have a sound so deep, so full, so lulling, so musical. Nothing so pleasant as to sit amid that mixture of the flower and the leaf, watching the bee-bird! Nothing so pretty to look at as my garden! It is quite a picture; only unluckily it resembles a picture in more qualities than one,—it is fit for nothing but to look at. One might as well think of walking in a bit of framed canvass. There are walks to be sure—tiny paths of smooth gravel, by courtesy called such—but they are so overhung by roses and lilies, and such gay encroachers—so overrun by convolvulus, and heart's-ease, and mignionette, and other sweet stragglers, that, except to edge through them occasionally, for the purposes of planting, or weeding, or watering, there might as well be no paths at all. Nobody thinks of walking in my garden. Even May glides along with a delicate and trackless step, like a swan through the water; and we, its two-footed denizens, are fain to treat it as if it were really a saloon, and go out for a walk towards sun-set, just as if we had not been sitting in the open air all day.

What a contrast from the quiet garden to the lively street! Saturday night is always a time of stir and bustle in our Village, and this is Whitsun-Eve, the pleasantest Saturday of all the year, when London journeymen and servant lads and lasses snatch a short holiday to visit their families. A short and precious holiday, the happiest and liveliest of any; for even the gambols and merry-makings of Christmas offer but a poor enjoyment, compared with the rural diversions, the Mayings, revels, and cricket-matches of Whitsuntide.

We ourselves are to have a cricket-match on Monday, not played by the men, who, since a certain misadventure with the Beech-hillers, are, I am sorry to say, rather chap-fallen, but by the boys, who, zealous for the honour of their parish, and headed by their bold leader, Ben Kirby, marched in a body to our antagonists' ground the Sunday after our melancholy defeat, challenged the boys of that proud hamlet, and beat them out and out on the spot. Never was a more signal victory. Our boys enjoyed this triumph with so little moderation that it had like to have produced a very tragical catastrophe. The captain of the Beech-hill youngsters, a capital bowler, by name Amos Stone, enraged past all bearing by the crowing of his adversaries, flung the ball at Ben Kirby with so true an aim, that if that sagacious leader had not warily ducked his head when he saw it coming, there would probably have been a coroner's inquest on the case, and Amos Stone would have been tried for manslaughter. He let fly with such vengeance, that the cricket-ball was found embedded in a bank of clay one hundred yards off, as if it had been a cannot-shot. Tom Coper and Farmer Thackum, the umpires, both say that they never saw so tremendous a ball. If Amos Stone live to be a man, (I mean to say if he be not hanged first,) he'll be a pretty player. He is coming here on Monday with his party to play the return match, the umpires having respectively engaged Farmer Thackum that Amos shall keep the peace, Tom Coper that Ben shall give no unnecessary or wanton provocation — a nicely-worded and lawyer-like clause, and one that proves that Tom Coper hath his doubts of the young gentleman's discretion; and, of a truth, so have I. I would not be Ben Kirby's surety, cautiously as the security is worded, — no! not for a white double dahlia, the present object of my ambition.

This village of ours is swarming to-night like a hive of bees, and all the church-bells round are pouring out their merriest peals, as if to call them together. I must try to give some notion of the various figures.

First there is a group suited to Teniers, a cluster of out-of-door customers of the Rose, old benchers of the inn, who sit round a table smoking and drinking in high solemnity to the sound of Timothy's fiddle. Next, a mass of eager boys, the combatants of Monday, who are surrounding the shoemaker's shop, where an invisible hole in their ball is mended by Master Keep himself, under the joint superintendence of Ben Kirby and Tom Coper. Ben showing much verbal respect and outward deference for his umpire's judgment and experience, but managing to get the ball done his own way after all; whilst outside the shop, the rest of the eleven, the less-trusted commons, are shouting and bawling round Joel Brent, who is twisting the waxed

* Sphynx ligustri, privet hawk-moth.

twine round the handles of the bats—the poor bats, which please nobody, which the taller youths are despising as too little and too light, and the smaller are abusing as too heavy and too large. Happy critics! winning their match can hardly be a greater delight—even if to win it they be doomed! Farther down the street is the pretty black-eyed girl, Sally Wheeler, come home for a holiday from B., escorted by a tall footman in a dashing livery, whom she is trying to curtsy off before her deaf grandmother sees him. I wonder whether she will succeed!

Ascending the hill are two couples of a different description. Daniel Tubb and his fair Valentine, walking boldly along like licensed lovers; they have been asked twice in church, and are to be married on Tuesday; and closely following that happy pair, near each other, but not together, come Jem Tanner and Mabel Green, the poor culprits of the wheat-hoeing. Ah! the little clerk hath not relented! The course of true-love doth not yet run smooth in that quarter. Jem dodges along, whistling "cherry-ripe," pretending to walk by himself, and to be thinking of nobody; but every now and then he pauses in his negligent saunter, and turns round outright to steal a glance at Mabel, who, on her part, is making believe to walk with poor Olive Hathaway, the lame mantua-maker, and even affecting to talk and to listen to that gentle, humble creature, as she points to the wild flowers on the common, and the lambs and children disporting amongst the gorse, but whose thoughts and eyes are evidently fixed on Jem Tanner, as she meets his backward glance with a blushing smile, and half springs forward to meet him; whilst Olive has broken off the conversation as soon as she perceived the pre-occupation of her companion, and begun humming, perhaps unconsciously, two or three lines of Burns, whose "Whistle and I'll come to thee, my love," and "Gi'e me a glance of thy bonnie black ee," were never better exemplified than in the couple before her. Really it is curious to watch them, and to see how gradually the attraction of this tantalizing vicinity becomes irresistible, and the rustic lover rushes to his pretty mistress like the needle to the magnet. On they go, trusting to the deepening twilight, to the little clerk's absence, to the good-humour of the happy lads and lasses, who are passing and repassing on all sides—or rather, perhaps, in a happy oblivion of the cross uncle, the kind villagers, the squinting lover, and the whole world. On they trip, linked arm-in-arm, he trying to catch a glimpse of her glowing face under her bonnet, and she hanging down her head and avoiding his gaze with a mixture of modesty and coquetry, which well becomes the rural beauty. On they go, with a reality and intensity of affection, which must overcome all obstacles; and poor Olive follows with an evident sympathy in their happiness, which makes her almost as enviable as they; and we pursue our walk amidst the moonshine and the nightingales, with Jacob Frost's cart looming in the distance, and the merry sounds of Whitsun-tide, the shout, the laugh, and the song echoing all around us, like "noises of the air."

JESSY LUCAS.

About the centre of a deep, winding, and woody lane, in our neighbouring village of Aberleigh, stands an old farm-house, whose stables, out-buildings, and ample barn-yard, have a peculiarly forlorn and deserted appearance; they can, in fact, scarcely be said to be occupied; the person who rents the land, preferring to live at a large farm about a mile distant, leaving this lonely house to the care of a labourer and his wife, who reside in one end, and have the charge of a few colts and heifers, that run in the orchard and an adjoining meadow; while the vacant rooms are tenanted by a widow in humble circumstances, and her young family.

The house is beautifully situated; deep, as I have said, in a narrow woody lane, which winds between high banks, now feathered with hazel, now studded with pollards and forest trees; until opposite Kibe's farm, it widens sufficiently to admit a large clear pond, round which the hedge, closely and regularly set, with a row of tall elms, sweeps in a graceful curve, forming for that bright mirror, a rich leafy frame. A little way farther on, the lane widens, and makes an abrupt winding, as it is crossed by a broad shallow stream, a branch of the Loddon, which comes meandering along from a chain of beautiful meadows, then turns in a narrower channel, by the side of the road, and finally spreads itself into a large piece of water, almost a lakelet, amidst the rushes and willows of Hartley Moor. A foot-bridge is flung over the stream, where it crosses the lane, which, with a giant oak growing on the bank, and throwing its broad branches far on the opposite side, forms, in every season, a pretty rural picture.

Kibe's farm is as picturesque as its situation; very old, very irregular, with gable-ends, clustered chimneys, casement windows, a large porch, and a sort of square wing, jutting out even with the porch, and covered with a luxuriant vine, which has quite the effect, especially when seen by moon-light, of an ivy-mantled tower. On one side, extend the ample, but disused farm-buildings, on the other, the old orchard, whose trees are so wild, so hoary, and so huge, as to convey the idea of a fruit forest. Behind the house is an ample kitchen garden, and before, a neat flower-court, the exclusive demesne of Mrs. Lucas and her

family, to whom indeed, the labourer, John Miles, and his good wife Dinah, served, in some sort, as domestics.

Mrs. Lucas had known far better days; her husband had been an officer, and died fighting bravely in one of the great victories of the last war, leaving her with three children, one lovely boy, and two delicate girls, to struggle through the world, as best she might. She was an accomplished woman, and at first settled in a great town, and endeavoured to improve her small income by teaching music and languages. But she was country-bred; her children too had been born in the country, amidst the sweetest recesses of the New Forest, and pining herself for liberty, and solitude, and green fields, and fresh air, she soon began to fancy that her children were visibly deteriorating in health and appearance, and pining for them also; and finding that her old servant, Dinah Miles, was settled with her husband in this deserted farm-house, she applied to his master, to rent, for a few months, the untenanted apartments, came to Aberleigh, and fixed there apparently for life.

We lived in different parishes, and she declined company, so that I seldom met Mrs. Lucas, and had lost sight of her for some time, retaining merely a general recollection of the mild, placid, elegant mother, surrounded by three rosy, romping, bright-eyed children, when the arrival of an intimate friend at Aberleigh vicarage, caused me frequently to pass the lonely farm-house, and threw this interesting family again under my observation.

The first time that I saw them, was on a bright summer evening, when the nightingale was yet in the coppice, the briar-rose blossoming in the hedge, and the sweet scent of the bean-fields perfuming the air. Mrs. Lucas, still lovely and elegant, though somewhat faded and care-worn, was walking pensively up and down the grass-path of the pretty flower-court: her eldest daughter, a rosy bright brunette, with her dark hair floating in all directions, was darting about like a bird: now tying up the pinks, now watering the geraniums; now collecting the fallen rose-leaves into the straw bonnet, which dangled from her arm; and now feeding a brood of bantams from a little barley measure, which that sagacious and active colony seemed to recognise as if by instinct, coming, long before she called them, at their swiftest pace, between a run and a fly, to await with their usual noisy and bustling patience, the showers of grain, which she flung to them across the paling. It was a beautiful picture of youth, and health, and happiness; and her clear, gay voice, and brilliant smile, accorded well with her shape and motion, as light as a butterfly, and as wild as the wind. A beautiful picture was that rosy lass of fifteen, in her unconscious loveliness, and I might have continued gazing upon her longer, had I not been attracted by an object no less charming, although in a very different way.

It was a slight elegant girl, apparently about a year younger than the pretty romp of the flower-garden, not unlike her in form and feature, but totally distinct in colouring and expression.

She sate in the old porch, wreathed with jessamine and honeysuckle, with the western sun floating round her like a glory, and displaying the singular beauty of her chestnut hair, brown, with a golden light, and the exceeding delicacy of her smooth and finely-grained complexion, so pale, and yet so healthful. Her whole face and form had a bending and statue-like grace, increased by the adjustment of her splendid hair, which was parted on her white forehead, and gathered up behind in a large knot, a natural coronet. Her eyebrows, and long eye-lashes, were a few shades darker than her hair, and singularly rich and beautiful. She was plaiting straw, rapidly, and skilfully, and bent over her work with a mild and placid attention, a sedate pensiveness that did not belong to her age, and which contrasted strangely and sadly with the gaiety of her laughing and brilliant sister, who at this moment darted up to her with a handful of pinks and some groundsel. Jessy received them with a smile: such a smile! spoke a few sweet words, in a sweet sighing voice; put the flowers in her bosom, and the groundsel in the cage of a linnet that hung near her; and then resumed her seat, and her work, imitating, better than I have ever heard them imitated, the various notes of a nightingale, who was singing in the opposite hedge, whilst I, ashamed of loitering longer, passed on.

The next time I saw her, my interest in this lovely creature was increased tenfold, for I then knew that Jessy was blind; a misfortune always so touching, especially in early youth, and in her case rendered peculiar affecting by the personal character of the individual. We soon became acquainted, and even intimate, under the benign auspices of the kind mistress of the vicarage, and every interview served to increase the interest excited by the whole family, and most of all, by the sweet blind girl.

Never was any human being more gentle, generous and grateful, or more unfeignedly resigned to her great calamity; the pensiveness that marked her character arose, as I soon perceived, from a different source. Her blindness had been of recent occurrence, arising from inflammation, unskilfully treated, and was pronounced incurable; but from coming on so lately, it admitted of several alleviations, of which she was accustomed to speak with a devout and tender gratitude. "She could work," she said, "as well as ever; and cut out, and write, and dress herself, and keep the keys, and run errands in the house she knew so well, without making any mistake or confusion. Reading, to be sure, she had been

forced to give up, and drawing, and some day or other she would show me, only that it seemed so vain, some verses which her brother William had written upon a group of wild flowers which she had begun before her misfortune. Oh! it was almost worth while to be blind, to be the subject of such verse, and the object of such affection. Her dear mamma was very good to her, and so was Emma, but William! oh she wished that I knew William! no one could be so kind as he! oh it was impossible! He read to her, he talked to her, he walked with her, he taught her to feel confidence in walking alone; he had made for her the wooden steps up the high bank which led to Kibe's meadow. He had put the hand-rail on the old bridge, so that now she could get across without danger, even when the brook was flooded. He had tamed her linnet; he had constructed the wooden frame, by the aid of which she could write so comfortably and evenly; could write letters to him, and say her own self, all that she felt of love and gratitude; and that," she continued with a deep sigh, "was her chief comfort now, for William was gone, and they should never meet again; never alive, that she was sure of, she knew it." "But why, Jessy?" "Oh because William was so much too good for this world, there was nobody like William! and he was gone for a soldier. Old General Lucas, her father's uncle, had sent for him abroad, had given him a commission in his regiment, and he would never come home, at least they should never meet again, of that she was sure — she knew it!"

This persuasion was evidently the master grief of poor Jessy's life; the cause, which far more than her blindness, faded her cheek, and saddened her spirit. How it had arisen, no one knew, partly perhaps from some lurking superstition, some idle word, or idler omen which had taken root in her mind, nourished by the calamity which, in other respects, she bore so calmly, but which left her so often in darkness and loneliness, to brood over her own gloomy forebodings; partly from her trembling sensibility, and partly from the delicacy of frame and of habit, which had always characterized the object of her love, a slender youth, whose ardent spirit was but too apt to overtask his body.

However it found admittance, there the presentiment was, hanging like a dark cloud over the sun-shine of Jessy's young life. Reasoning was useless; they know little of the passions who seek to argue with that most intractable of them all, the fear that is born of love. So Mrs. Lucas and Emma tried to amuse away these sad thoughts, trusting to time, to William's letters, and above all, to William's return to eradicate the evil. The letters came punctually and gaily; letters that might have quieted the heart of any sister in England, except the fluttering heart of Jessy Lucas. William spoke of improved health, of increased strength, of actual promotion, and expected recall. At last he even announced his return, under auspices the most gratifying to his mother, and the most beneficial to her family. The regiment was ordered home, and the old and wealthy relation, under whose protection he had already risen so rapidly, had expressed his intention to accompany him to Kibe's farm, to be introduced to his nephew's widow, and daughters, especially Jessy, for whom he expressed himself greatly interested. A letter from General Lucas himself, which arrived by the same post, was still more explicit; it adduced the son's admirable character, and exemplary conduct, as reasons for befriending the mother, and avowed his design of providing for each of his young relations, and of making William his heir.

For half an hour after the first hearing of these letters, Jessy was happy; till the peril of a winter voyage, for it was deep January, crossed her imagination, and checked her joy. At length, long before they were expected, another letter arrived, dated Portsmouth. They had sailed by the next vessel to that which conveyed their previous despatches, and might be expected hourly at Kibe's farm. The voyage was past, safely past, and the weight seemed now really taken from Jessy's heart. She raised her sweet face, and smiled; yet still it was a fearful and trembling joy, and somewhat of fear was mingled even with the very intensity of her hope.

It had been a time of wind and rain, and the Loddon, the beautiful Loddon, always so affluent in water, had overflowed its boundaries, and swelled the smaller streams which it fed into torrents. The brook which crossed Kibe's lane, had washed away part of the foot-bridge, destroying poor William's railing, and was still foaming and dashing, like a cataract. Now this was the nearest way; and if William should insist on coming that way! To be sure, the carriage-road was round by Grazeley Green, but to cross the road would save half a mile; and William, dear William, would never think of danger, to get to those whom he loved. These were Jessy's thoughts; the fear seemed impossible, for no postilion would think of breasting that roaring stream; but the fond sister's heart was fluttering like a new-caught bird, and she feared she knew not what.

All day she paced the little court, and stopped and listened, and listened and stopped. About sun-set, with the nice sense of sound, which seemed to come with her fearful calamity, and that fine sense quickened by anxiety, expectation, and love, she heard, she thought she heard, she was sure she heard the sound of a carriage rapidly advancing on the other side of the stream. "It is only the noise of the rushing waters," cried Emma. "I hear

a carriage, the horses, the wheels," replied Jessy; and darted off at once, with the double purpose of meeting William and warning the postilion against crossing the stream. Emma and her mother followed, fast! fast! but what speed could vie with Jessy's, when the object was William! They called, but she neither heard or answered. Before they had won to the bend in the lane, she had reached the brook, and long before either of her pursuers had gained the bridge, her foot had slipt, from the wet and tottering plank, and she was borne resistlessly down the stream. Assistance was immediately procured; men, and boats, and ropes; for the sweet blind girl was beloved by all; and many a poor man perilled his life, in a fruitless endeavour to save Jessy Lucas. And William too, was there, for Jessy's quickened sense had not deceived her. William was there, struggling with all the strength of love and agony, to rescue that dear and helpless creature; but every effort, although he persevered, till he too was taken out senseless—every effort was vain. The fair corse was recovered, but life was extinct. Poor Jessy's prediction was verified to the letter; and the brother and his favourite sister never met again.

A COUNTRY BARBER.

In the little primitive town of Cranley, where I spent the first few years of my life—a town which, but for the distinction of a market and a post-office, might have passed for a moderately-sized village—the houses in that part of the great western road which passed through it, were so tumbled about, so intermixed with garden walls, garden palings, and garden hedges, to say nothing of stables, farm-yards, pigsties and barns, that it derogated nothing from the dignity of the handsome and commodious dwelling in which I had the honour to be born, that its next-door neighbour was a barber's shop, a real, genuine, old-fashioned barber's shop, consisting of a low-browed cottage, with a pole before it; a basin, as bright as Mambrino's helmet, in the window; a half-hatch always open, through which was visible a little dusty hole, where a few wigs, on battered wooden blocks, were ranged round a comfortable shaving chair; and a legend over the door, in which "William Skinner, wig-maker, hair-dresser, and barber," was set forth in yellow letters on a blue ground. I left Cranley before I was four years old; and, next to a certain huge wax-doll, called Sophy, who died the usual death of wax-dolls, by falling out of the nursery window, the most vivid and the pleasantest of my early recollections is our good neighbour Will Skinner—for by that endearing abbreviation he was called everywhere but in his own inscription. So agreeable, indeed, is the impression which he has left on my memory, that although, doubtless, the he-people find it more convenient to shave themselves, and to dispense with wigs and powder, yet I cannot help regretting, the more for his sake, the decline and extinction of a race, which, besides figuring so notably in the old novels and comedies, formed so genial a link between the higher and lower orders of society; supplying to the rich the most familiar of followers and most harmless of gossips.

It certainly was not Will Skinner's beauty that caught my fancy. His person was hardly of the kind to win a lady's favour, even although that lady were only four years of age. He was an elderly man, with an infirm feeble step, which gave him the air of being older than he was: a lank, long, stooping figure, which seemed wavering in the wind like a powder-puff; a spare wrinkled visage, with the tremulous appearance about the mouth and cheeks which results from extreme thinness; a pale complexion; scanty white hair; and a beard considerably longer than beseemed his craft.

Neither did his apparel serve greatly to set off his lean and wrinkled person. It was usually composed within-doors, of a faded linen jacket; without, of a grey pepper-and-salt coat, repaired with black; both somewhat the worse for wear; both "a world too wide for his shrunk" sides, and both well covered with powder. Dusty as a miller was Will Skinner. Even the hat, which by frequent reverential applications of his finger and thumb, had become moulded into a perpetual form of salutation, was almost as richly frosted as a church-warden's wig. Add to this a white apron, with a comb sticking out of the pocket; shoes clumsily patched—poor Will was his own cobbler; blue stockings, indifferently darned—he was to boot his own sempstress; and a ragged white cravat, marvellously badly ironed—for he was also his own washerwoman; and the picture will be complete.

Good old man! I see him in my mind's eye at this moment; lean, wrinkled, shabby, poor, slow of speech, ungainly of aspect; yet pleasant to look at, and delightful to recollect, in spite of rags, ugliness, age, and poverty. It was the contented expression of his withered countenance, the cheerful humility of his deportment, and the overflowing kindness of his temper, that rendered Will Skinner so general a favourite. There was nothing within his small power that he was not ready to undertake for any body. At home in every house, and conversant in every business, he was the universal help of the place. Poor he was certainly, as poor as well could be, and lonely; for he had been

crossed in love in his youth, and lived alone in his little tenement, with no other companions than his wig-blocks and a tame starling, ("pretty company" he used to call them); but destitute as he was of worldly goods, and although people loved to talk of him with a kind of gentle pity, I have always considered him as one of the happiest persons of my acquaintance; one "who suffered all as suffering nothing;" a philosopher rather of temperament than of reason; the only man in the parish, as mine host of the Swan used to observe, "who was foolish enough to take a drink of small-beer as thankfully as a draught of double ale."

His fortunes had, at one time, assumed a more flourishing aspect. Our little insignificant town was one of the richest livings in England, and had been held by the Bishop of * * *, in conjunction with his very poor see. He resided nearly half the year at Cranley Rectory, and was the strenuous friend and patron of our friend Will. A most orthodox person at all points was the bishop, portly, comely, and important; one who had won his way to the Bench by learning and merit, and was rather more finical about his episcopal decorations, and more jealous of his episcopal dignity, than a man early accustomed to artificial distinctions is apt to be. He omitted no opportunity of rustling and bustling in a silk apron; assumed the lawn sleeves whenever it was possible to introduce those inconvenient but pleasant appendages to the clerical costume; and was so precise in the article of perukes, as to have had one constructed in London on the exact model of the caxon worn by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, which our orthodox divine appears to have considered as a sort of regulation wig. Now this magnificent cauliflower, (for such it was), had never been frosted to his Lordship's satisfaction until it came under the hands of Will Skinner, who was immediately appointed his shaver, wig-dresser, and wig-maker in ordinary, and recommended by him to all the beards and caxons in the neighbourhood. Nor did the kindness of his right reverend patron end here. Pleased with his barber's simplicity and decency of demeanour, as well as with the zealous manner in which he led the psalmody at church, quivering forth in a high thin voice the strains of Hopkins and Sternhold, the good Bishop determined to promote him in that line; appointed him to the sextonship which happened to fall vacant; and caused him to officiate as deputy to David Hunt, the parish-clerk—a man of eighty, worn out in the service, and now bed-ridden with the rheumatism—with a complete understanding that he should succeed to the post, as soon as David was fairly deposited in the church-yard. These were comfortable prospects. But, alas! the Bishop, a hale man of sixty, happened to die first; and his successor in the rectory, a little, thin, bald-headed person, as sharp as a needle, who shaved himself and wore no wigs, took such a disgust at certain small irregularities, such as marking the evening lessons instead of the morning, forgetting to say Amen in the proper place, and other mistakes committed in his trepidation by the clerk-deputy when the new incumbent came to read in, that, instead of the translation to a higher post, which poor Will anticipated, he was within an ace of losing his sextonship, which he was only permitted to retain, on condition of never raising his voice again in a stave so long as he lived; the rector, a musical amateur, having been so excruciated by Will's singing, as to be fain to stop his ears. Thus ended all his hopes of church preferment.

After this disaster, the world began to go ill with him. People learnt to shave themselves, that was a great evil; they took to wearing their own hair, that was a greater; and when the French revolution and cropped heads came into fashion, and powder and hair-dressing went out, such was the defalcation of his customers, and the desolate state of his trade, that poor Will, in spite of the smallness of his wants, and the equanimity of his spirit, found himself nearly at his wit's end. In this dilemma he resolved to turn his hand to other employments; and living in the neighbourhood of a famous trout stream, and becoming possessed of a tattered copy of Izaak Walton's Complete Angler, he applied himself to the construction of artificial flies; in which delicate manufacture, facilitated doubtless by his dexterity in wig-weaving, he soon became deservedly eminent.

This occupation he usually followed in his territory, the church-yard, as pleasant a place to be buried in as heart could desire, occupying a gentle eminence by the side of Cranley Down, on which the cricketers of that cricketing country used to muster two elevens for practice, almost every fine evening, from Easter to Michaelmas. Thither Will, who had been a cricketer himself in his youth, and still loved the wind of a ball, used to resort on summer afternoons; perching himself on a large square raised monument, whose very inscription was worn away, a spreading lime-tree above his head, Izaak Walton before him, and his implements of trade at his side. I never read that delicious book without remembering how Will Skinner used to study it. Skipping the fine pastoral poetry, and still more poetical prose of the dialogues, and poring over the notes, as a housekeeper pores over the receipts in the Cook's Oracle, or a journeyman apothecary applies himself to the London Pharmacopeia. Curious directions of a truth they were, and curiously followed. The very list of materials had in it something striking and outlandish; camel's hair, badger's hair, hog's wool, seal's fur, cock's hackles, a

heron's neck, a starling's wing, a mallard's tail, and the crest of a peacock!

These and a thousand such knick-knacks, a wilderness of fur and feather, were ranged beside him, with real nicety, but seeming confusion; and mingled with flies, finished or in progress, and with homelier and more familiar tools, hooks, bristles, shoemaker's-wax, needles, scissors, marking-silk of all colours, and "barge sail for dubbing." And there he sate, now manufacturing a cannon-fly, "dubbing it with black wool, and Isabella-coloured mohair, and bright brownish bear's hair, warped on with yellow silk, shaping the wings of the feather of a woodcock's wing, and working the head of an ash colour," and now watching Tom Taylor's unparagoned bowling, or throwing away the half-dubbed cannon-fly, in admiration of Jem Willis's hits.

On this spot our intimacy commenced. A spoilt child and an only child, it was my delight to escape from my nurse and nursery, and all the restraint of female management, and to follow everywhere the dear papa, my chief spoiler, who so fully returned my partiality, as to have a little pad constructed on which I used to accompany him in his excursions on horseback.

The only place at which his fondness ever allowed him to think my presence burthensome was the cricket-ground, to which I used regularly to follow him in spite of all remonstrance and precaution, causing him no small perplexity, as to how to bestow me in safety during the game. Will and the monument seemed to offer exactly the desired refuge, and our good neighbour readily consented to fill the post of deputy nursery-maid for the time, assisted in the superintendence by a very beautiful and sagacious black Newfoundland dog, called Coe, who partly from a sense of duty, and partly from personal affection, used when out to take me under his particular care, and mounted guard over the monument as well as Will Skinner, who assuredly required all the aid that could be mustered to cope with my vagaries.

Poor dear old man, what a life I led him! —now playing at bo-peep on one side of the great monument, and now on the other; now crawling away amongst the green graves; now starting up between two head-stones; now shouting in triumph with my small childish voice, from the low church-yard wall; now gliding round before him, and laughing up in his face as he sate. Poor dear old man! with what undeviating good-humour did he endure my naughtiness! How he would catch me away from the very shadow of danger, if a ball came near! and how often did he interrupt his own labours to forward my amusement, sliding from his perch to gather lime branches to stick in Coe's collar, or to collect daisies, buttercups, or ragged-robbins to make what I used to call daisy-beds for my doll.

Perhaps there might be a little self-defence in this last-mentioned kindness; the picking to pieces of flowers and making of daisy-beds being, as Will well knew, the most efficacious means of hindering me from picking to pieces his oak-flies or May-flies; or, which was still worse, of constructing others after my own fashion out of his materials; which, with a spirit of imitation as innocently mischievous as a monkey, I used to purloin for the purpose the moment his back was turned, mixing marten's fur and otter's fur, and dipping my little fingers amongst brown and red hackles, with an audacity that would have tried the patience of Job. How Will's held out I cannot imagine! but he never got farther than a very earnest supplication that I would give over helping him, a deprecation of my assistance, a "pray don't, dear Miss!" that on remembering the provocation seems to me a forbearance surpassing that of Grisildis. What is the desertion of a good-for-nothing husband, and even the cooking his second wedding dinner, (so I believe the story runs,) compared to seeing an elf of four years old mixing and oversetting the thousand and one materials of fly-making! Old Chaucer hath made the most of it, but in point of patience Grisildis was nothing to Will Skinner.

And yet to do myself justice, my intentions towards my friend the fly-maker, were perfectly friendly. Mischievous as I undoubtedly was, I did not intend to do mischief. If I filched *from* him, I filched *for* him; courted the cook for pheasant and partridge feathers; begged the old jays and black-birds which were hung up in terrorem in the cherry-trees from the gardener, dragged a great bit of Turkey carpet to the church-yard because I had heard him say that it made good dubbing; got into a demêlé with a peacock in the neighbourhood from seizing a piece of his tail to form the bodies of Will's dragon-flies; and had an affair with a pig, in an attempt to procure that staple commodity, hog's down. N.B. the hog had the better of that battle; and but for the intervention of my friend Coe, who seeing the animal in chase of me, ran to the rescue, and pulled him back by the tail, I might have rued my attack upon those pig's ears (for behind them grows the commodity in question,) to this very hour.

Besides the torment that I unconsciously gave him, poor Will had not always reason to congratulate himself on the acquaintance of my faithful follower, Coe. He was, as I have said, a dog of great accomplishment and sagacity, and possessed in perfection all the tricks, which boys and servants love so well to teach to this docile and noble race. Now it so happened that our barber, in the general defalcation of wig-wearers at Cranley, retained one constant customer, a wealthy grocer, who had been churchwarden ever since the Bishop's time, and still emulated that regretted prelate

in the magnificence of his peruke; wearing a caxon such as I have seldom seen on any head, except that of Mr. Fawcett on the stage, and of Dr. Parr off.

Mr. Samuel Saunders, such was the name of our churchwarden, having had the calamity to lose a wife whom he had wedded some forty years before, was, as the talk went, paying his addresses to pretty Jenny Wren, the bar-maid at the Swan. Samuel was a thick, short, burly person, with a red nose, a red waistcoat, and a cinnamon-coloured coat, altogether a very proper wearer of the buzz wig. If all the men in Cranley could have been ranged in a row, the wig would have been assigned to him, in right of look and demeanour, just as the hats in one corner of Hogarth's print, The Election Ball, can be put each on the proper head without difficulty. The man and the wig matched each other. Now Jenny Wren was no match for either. She was a pretty, airy, jaunty girl, with a merry hazel eye, a ready smile, and a nimble tongue, the arrantest flirt in Cranley, talking to every beau in the parish, but listening only to tall Thomas, our handsome groom.

An ill match for Samuel Saunders at sixty, or for Samuel Saunders' wig, was the pretty coquette Jenny Wren at eighteen! The disparity was painful to think of. But it was the old story. Samuel was wealthy and Jenny poor; and uncles, aunts, friends and cousins coaxed and remonstrated; and poor Jenny pouted and cried, and vowed fifty times a day that she would not marry him if he were fifty times as rich; till at length, worn out by importunity, exhausted by the violence of her own opposition, offended by the supineness of her favourite lover, and perhaps a little moved by the splendour of the churchwarden's presents, she began to relent, and finally consented to the union.

The match was now talked of as certain by all the gossips in Cranley,—some had even gone so far as to fix the wedding-day; when one evening our handsome groom, tall Thomas, poor Jenny's favourite beau, passing by Will Skinner's shop, followed by Coe, saw a new wig of Samuel Saunders' pattern, doubtless the identical wedding wig, reposing in full friz on one of the battered wooden blocks. "High, Coe!" said Thomas, making a sign with his hand; and in an instant Coe had sprung over the half-hatch, into the vacant shop, had seized the well-powdered perriwig, and in another instant returned with it into the street, and followed Thomas, wig in mouth, into the little bar at the Swan, where sate Mr. Samuel Saunders, making love to Jenny Wren.

The sudden apparition of his wig borne in so unexpected a manner, wholly discomfited the unlucky suitor and even dumfounded his fair mistress. "High, Coe! high!" repeated Thomas, and, at the word, Coe, letting drop the first caxon, sprang upon that living block, Samuel Saunders' noddle, snatched off the other wig, and deposited both his trophies at Jenny's feet!—a catastrophe, which was followed in less than a month by the marriage of the handsome groom and the pretty bar-maid; for the churchwarden, who had withstood all other rebuffs, was driven for ever from the field by the peals of laughter, which, after the first surprise was over, burst inexpressibly from both the lovers. In less than a month they were married; and Will Skinner and Coe, who had hitherto avoided each other by mutual consent, met as guests at the wedding-dinner; and through the good offices of the bridegroom, were completely and permanently reconciled; Coe's consciousness being far more difficult to conquer than the shortlived anger of the most placable of barbers.

HAY-CARRYING.

At one of the cluster of cottages and cottage-like houses, which formed the little street of Hilton cross — a pretty but secluded village, a few miles to the south, — stood the shop of Judith Kent, widow, "Licensed"— as the legend imported, "to vend tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff." Tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff, formed, however, but a small part of the multifarious merchandise of Mrs. Kent; whose shop, the only repository of the hamlet, might have seemed an epitome of the wants and luxuries of humble life. In her window, candles, bacon, sugar, mustard, and soap, flourished amidst calicoes, oranges, dolls, ribbons, and gingerbread. Crockery-ware was piled on one side of her door-way, Dutch cheese and Irish butter encumbered the other; brooms and brushes rested against the wall; and ropes of onions and bunches of red herrings hung from the ceiling. She sold bread, butcher's meat, and garden-stuff, on commission; and engrossed, at a word, the whole trade of Hilton Cross.

Notwithstanding this monopoly, the world went ill with poor Judith. She was a mild, pleasant-looking, middle-aged woman, with a heart too soft for her calling. She could not say, no! to the poor creatures who came to her on a Saturday night, to seek bread for their children, however deep they might already be in her debt, or however certain it was, that their husbands were, at that moment, spending, at the Checquers or the Four Horse-shoes, the money that should have supported their wives and families; for in this village, as in others, there were two flourishing ale-houses, although but one ill-accustomed shop—"but one half-pennyworth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack!"

She could not say, no! as a prudent woman might have said; and, accordingly, half the

poor people in the parish might be found on her books, whilst she herself was gradually getting in arrears with her baker, her grocer, and her landlord. Her family consisted of two children: Mary, a pretty, fair-haired, smiling lass, of twelve or thirteen, and Robert, a fine youth, nearly ten years older, who worked in the gardens of a neighbouring gentleman. Robert, conscious that his mother's was no gainful trade, often pressed her to give up business, sell off her stock, relinquish her house, and depend on his labour for her support; but of this she would not hear.

Many motives mingled in her determination: a generous reluctance to burthen her dutiful son with her maintenance,—a natural fear of losing *caste* among her neighbours,—a strong love of the house which, for five-and-twenty years, had been her home,—a vague hope that times would mend and all come right again, (wiser persons than Mrs. Kent have lulled reason to sleep, with such an opiate!) and, above all, a want of courage, to look her difficulties fairly in the face. Besides she liked her occupation,—its petty consequence, its bustle, and its gossipry; and she had a sense of gain in the small peddling bargains,—the pennyworths of needles, and balls of cotton, and rows of pins, and yards of tape, which she was accustomed to vend for ready money, that overbalanced, for the moment, her losses and her debts; so that, in spite of her son's presages and warnings, the shop continued in full activity.

In addition to his forebodings respecting his mother, Robert had another misfortune;—the poor youth was in love.

About a quarter of a mile down the shady lane, which ran by one side of Mrs. Kent's dwelling, was the pretty farm-house, orchard, and homestead of Farmer Bell, whose eldest daughter Susan,—the beauty of the parish—was the object of a passion, almost amounting to idolatry. And in good sooth, Susan Bell was well fitted to inspire such a passion. Besides a light graceful figure, moulded with the exactest symmetry, she had a smiling, innocent countenance, a complexion coloured like the brilliant blossoms of the balsam, and hair of a shining golden brown, like the fruit of the horse-chestnut. Her speech was at once modest and playful, her temper sweet, and her heart tender. She loved Robert dearly, although he often gave her cause to wish, that she loved him not; for Robert was subject to the intermitting fever, called jealousy, causelessly—as he himself would declare, when a remission of the disease gave room for his natural sense to act—causelessly and penitently, but still pertinaciously jealous.

I have said that he was a fine young man, tall, dark, and slender; I should add, that he was a good son, a kind brother, a pattern of sobriety and industry, and possessed of talent and acquirement far beyond his station. But there was about him an ardour, a vigour, a fiery restlessness, commonly held proper to the natives of the south of Europe, but which may be found sometimes amongst our own peasantry; all his pursuits, whether of sport or labour, took the form of passion. At ten years old, he had far outstripped his fellow-pupils at the Foundation School, to which, through the kindness of the 'squire of the parish, his mother had been able to send him;—at eighteen he was the best cricketer, the best flute-player, the best bell-ringer, and the best gardener in the county; and some odd volumes of Shakspeare having come into his possession, there was some danger at twenty of his turning out a dramatic poet, had not the kind discouragement of his master, to whom some of his early scenes were shown by his patron and admirer, the head gardener, acted as a salutary check. Indeed, so strong at one time was the poetical *furor*, that such a catastrophe as an entire play might, probably, have ensued, notwithstanding Mr. Lescomb's judicious warnings, had not love, the master-passion, fallen, about this time, in poor Robert's way, and engrossed all the ardour of his hardened temperament.

The beauty and playfulness of his mistress, whilst they enchanted his fancy, kept the jealous irritability of his nature in perpetual alarm. He suspected a lover in every man who approached her; and the firm refusal of her father to sanction their union, till her impatient wooer was a little more forward in the world, completed his disquiet. Affairs were in this posture, when a new personage arrived at Hilton Cross.

In addition to her other ways and means, Mrs. Kent tried to lessen her rent by letting lodgings; and the neat, quiet, elderly gentlewoman, the widow of a long-deceased rector, who had occupied her rooms ever since Robert was born, being at last gathered to her fathers, an advertisement of "pleasant apartments to let, in the airy village of Hilton Cross," appeared in the county paper. This announcement was as true, as if it had not formed an advertisement in a country newspaper. Very airy *was* the pretty village of Hilton Cross—with its breezy uplands, and its open common, dotted, as it were, with cottages and clumps of trees; and very pleasant *were* Mrs. Kent's apartments, for those who had sufficient taste to appreciate their rustic simplicity, and sufficient humility to overlook their smallness. The little chamber glittering with whiteness; its snowy dimity bed, and, "fresh sheets smelling of lavender," the sitting-room, a thought larger, carpeted with India matting, its shining cane-chairs, and its bright casement wreathed, on one side, by a luxuriant jessamine, on the other by the tall cluster musk-rose sending its bunches of odorous blossoms into the very

window; the little flower-court underneath, full of holly-oaks, cloves, and dahlias, and the large sloping meadow beyond, leading up to farmer Bell's tall irregular house, half covered with a flaunting vine; his barns, and ricks, and orchard;—all this formed an apartment too tempting to remain long untenanted, in the bright month of August: accordingly, it was almost immediately engaged by a gentleman in black, who walked over, one fair morning, paid ten pounds as a deposit, sent for his trunk from the next town, and took possession on the instant.

Her new inmate, who, without positively declining to give his name, had yet contrived to evade all the questions Mrs. Kent could devise, proved a perpetual source of astonishment, both to herself and her neighbours.

He was a well-made, little man, near upon forty; with considerable terseness of feature, a forehead of great power, whose effect was increased by a slight baldness on the top of the head, and an eye like a falcon. Such an eye! It seemed to go through you—to strike all that it looked upon, like a *coup-de-soleil.* Luckily, the stranger was so merciful as, generally, to wear spectacles; under cover of which those terrible eyes might see, and be seen, without danger.

His habits were as peculiar as his appearance. He was moderate, and rather fanciful in his diet; drank nothing but water, or strong coffee, made, as Mrs. Kent observed, very wastefully; and had, as she also remarked, a great number of heathenish-looking books scattered about the apartment—Lord Berners's Froissart, for instance, Sir Thomas Brown's Urn Burial, the Baskerville Ariosto,—Goethe's Faust,—a Spanish Don Quixote—and an interleaved Philoctetes, full of outline drawings. The greater part of his time was spent out of doors.— He would, even, ramble away, for three or four days together, with no other companion than a boy, hired in the village to carry what Mrs. Kent denominated his odds and ends; which odds and ends consisted, for the most part, of an angling-rod and a sketching apparatus—our incognito being, as my readers have, by this time, probably discovered, no other than an artist, on his summer progress.

Robert speedily understood the stranger, and was delighted with the opportunity of approaching so gifted a person: although he contemplated, with a degree of generous envy, which a king's regalia would have failed to excite in his bosom, those *chef d'œuvres* of all nations which were to him as "sealed books," and the pencils, whose power seemed to him little less than creative. He redoubled his industry in the garden, that he might, conscientiously, devote hours and half-hours, to pointing out the deep pools and shallow eddies of their romantic stream, where he knew, from experience (for Robert, amongst his other accomplishments, was no mean "brother of the angle,") that fish were likely to be found; and, better still, he loved to lead to the haunts of his childhood, the wild bosky dells, and the sunny ends of lanes, where a sudden turn in the track, an overhanging tree, an old gate, a cottage chimney, and a group of cattle or children, had, sometimes, formed a picture, on which his mind had fed for hours.

It was Robert's chief pleasure to entice his lodger to scenes such as these, and to see his own visions growing into reality, under the glowing pencil of the artist; and he, in his turn, would admire, and marvel at, the natural feeling of the beautiful, which could lead an uninstructed country-youth instinctively to the very elements of the picturesque. A general agreement of taste had brought about a degree of association unusual between persons so different in rank: a particular instance of this accordance dissolved the intimacy.

Robert had been, for above a fortnight, more than commonly busy in Mr. Lescombe's gardens and hot-houses, so busy that he even slept at the hall; the stranger, on the other hand, had been, during the same period, shut up, painting, in the little parlour. At last, they met; and the artist invited his young friend to look at the picture, which had engaged him during his absence. On walking into the room he saw on the easel, a picture in oils, almost finished. The style was of that delightful kind, which combines figures with landscape, the subject was Hay-carrying; and the scene, that very sloping meadow,—crowned by Farmer Bell's tall irregular house, its vine-wreathed porch, and chimneys, the great walnut-tree before the door, the orchard and the homestead—which formed the actual prospect from the windows before them. In the foreground was a wagon piled with hay, surrounded by the Farmer and his fine family,—some pitching, some loading, some raking after, all intent on their pleasant business. The only disengaged persons in the field were young Mary Kent and Harry Bell, an urchin of four years old, who rode on her knee on the top of the wagon, crowned and wreathed with garlands of vine-leaves, and bind-weed, and poppies, and corn-flowers. In the front looking up at Mary Kent, and her little brother, and playfully tossing to them the lock of hay which she had gathered on her rake, stood Susan Bell, her head thrown back, her bonnet half off, her light and lovely figure shown, in all its grace, by the pretty attitude and the short cool dress; while her sweet face, glowing with youth and beauty, had a smile playing over it, like a sunbeam. The boy was nodding and laughing to her, and seemed longing—as well he might—to escape from his flowery bondage, and jump into her arms. Never had poet framed a lovelier image of rural beauty! Never had painter more felicitously realized his conception!

"Well, Robert!" exclaimed our artist, a

little impatient of the continued silence, and missing the expected praise, "Well!" but still Robert spoke not. "Don't you think it a good subject?" continued the man of the easel: "I was sitting at the window, reading Froissart, whilst they were carrying the after-crop, and by good luck happened to look up, just as they had arranged themselves into this very group, and as the evening sun came slanting, exactly as it does now, across the meadow; so I dashed in the sketch instantly, got Mary to sit to me,—and a very pretty nymph-like figure she makes—dressed the boy with flowers, just as he was decked out for the harvest home—the rogue is, really, a fit model for a Cupid; they are a glorious family!—and persuaded Susan—" at that name, Robert, unable to control himself longer, rushed out of the room, leaving the astonished painter in the full belief that his senses had forsaken him.

The unhappy lover, agonized by jealousy, pursued his way to the farm. He had, hitherto, contrived, although without confessing his motive, even to himself, to keep his friend and his mistress asunder. He had no fears of her virtue, or of his honour; but, to Robert's romantic simplicity, it seemed that no one could gaze on Susan without feeling ardent love, and that such a man as the artist could never love in vain. Besides, in the conversation which they had held together, he had dwelt on beauty and simplicity, as the most attractive points of female character:—Robert had felt, as he spoke, that Susan was the very being whom he described, and had congratulated himself that they were, still, unacquainted. But now, they had met; he had seen, he had studied, had transferred to canvass that matchless beauty; had conquered the timidity which, to Robert, had always seemed unconquerable; had won her to admit his gaze, had tamed that shyest, coyest dove; had become familiar with that sweetest face, and that dearest form:—Oh! the very thought was agony!

In this mood, he arrived at the farm; and there, working at her needle under the vine-wreathed porch, with the evening sun shining full upon her, and her little brother playing at her feet, sate his own Susan. She heard his rapid step, and advanced to meet him with a smile and a blush of delight, just the smile and blush of the picture. At such a moment, they increased his misery; he repulsed her offered hand, and poured forth a torrent of questions on the subject which possessed his mind. Her innocent answers were fuel to his frenzy:—"The picture! had he seen the picture? and was it not pretty? much too pretty, she thought, but every body called it like! and Mary and Harry—was not he pleased with them? What a wonderful thing it was to make a bit of canvass so like living creatures! and what a wonderful man the strange gentleman was! she had been afraid of him, at first—sadly afraid of those two bright eyes—and so had Harry:—poor Harry had cried! but he was so merry and so kind, that neither of them minded sitting to him, now! And she was so glad that Robert had seen the picture; she had so wanted him to see it! it was too pretty, to be sure,—but, then, Robert would not mind that. She had told the gentleman"—"Go to the gentleman, now," interrupted Robert, "and tell him that I relinquish you. It will be welcome news! Go to him, Susan! your heart is with him. Go to him, I say!" and, throwing from him, with a bitter laugh, the frightened and weeping girl, who had laid her trembling hand on his arm, to detain him, he darted from the door, and returned to his old quarters at the hall.

Another fortnight passed, and Robert still kept aloof from his family and his home. His mother and sister, indeed, occasionally saw him; and sad accounts had poor little Mary to give to her friend Susan, of Robert's ill looks and worse spirits. And Susan listened, and said she did not care; and burst into a passion of tears, and said she was very happy; and vowed never to speak to him again, and desired Mary never to mention her to him, or him to her, and then asked her a hundred questions respecting his looks and his words, and his illness, and charged her with a thousand tender messages, which, in the next breath, she withdrew. And Mary, too young to understand the inconsistencies of love, pitied, and comforted, and thought it "passing strange."

In the meantime misfortunes of a different kind were gathering round Mrs. Kent. The meal-man and baker, whose bread she vended, her kindest friend and largest creditor, died, leaving his affairs in the hands of an attorney of the next town, the pest and terror of the neighbourhood; and, on the same day, she received two letters from this formidable lawyer,—one on account of his dead client, the baker, the other in behalf of his living client, the grocer, who ranked next amongst her creditors, both threatening that if their respective claims were not liquidated, on or before a certain day, proceedings would be commenced against her, forthwith.

It is in such a situation that woman most feels her helplessness,—especially that forlorn creature whom the common people, adopting the pathetic language of Scripture, designate by the expressive phrase, "a lone woman!" Poor Judith sate down to cry, in powerless sorrow and vain self-pity. She opened, indeed, her hopeless day-book,—but she knew too well, that her debtors could not pay. She had no one to consult,—for her lodger, in whose general cleverness she had great confidence, had been absent, on one of his excursions, almost as long as her son,—and time pressed upon her,—for the letters, sent with the usual indirectness of country conveyance, originally given to the carrier,

confided by the carrier to the butterman, carried on by the butterman to the next village, left for three days at a public-house, and, finally, delivered at Hilton Cross, by a return post-boy, had been nearly a week on the road. Saturday was the day fixed for payment, and this was Friday night! and Michaelmas and rent-day were approaching! and unable even to look at this accumulation of misery, poor Judith laid her head on her fruitless accompt-book, and sobbed aloud!

It was with a strangely mingled feeling of comfort in such a son, and sorrow so to grieve him, that she heard Robert's voice at her side, asking, tenderly, what ailed her? She put the letters into his hands; and he, long prepared for the blow, soothed and cheered her. "All must be given up," he said, "and he would go with her the next day, to make over the whole property. Let us pay, as far as our means go, mother," pursued he, "and do not fear but, some day or other, we shall be able to discharge all our debts. God will speed an honest purpose. In the mean time, Mr. Lescombe will give us a cottage—I know he will—and I shall work for you and Mary. It will be something to live for—something worth living for. Be comforted, dear mother!" He stooped, as he said this, and kissed her; and when he arose, he saw Susan standing opposite to him, and behind her, the stranger. They had entered separately, during the conversation between the mother and son, and Susan was still unconscious of the artist's presence.

She stood, in great agitation, pressing Mary's hand, (from whom she had heard the story,) and immediately began questioning Mrs. Kent, as to the extent of the calamity. "She had twenty pounds of her own, that her grandmother had left her;—but a hundred! did they want a whole hundred? and would they send Mrs. Kent to prison? and sell her goods? and turn Mary out of doors? and Robert—Oh! how ill Robert looked?—It would kill Robert!—Oh!" continued Susan, wringing her hands, "I would sell myself for a bondwoman, I would be like a negro-slave for one hundred pounds!" "Would you?" said the stranger advancing, suddenly, from the door, and producing two bank-bills; "would you? well! we will strike a bargain. I will give you two hundred pounds for this little hand, only this little hand!"—"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed Mrs. Kent; "what can you mean?" "Nothing but what is fair and honourable," returned her lodger; "let Susan promise to meet me at church, to-morrow, and here are two hundred pounds to dispose of, at her pleasure, to-night." "Susan! my dear Susan!"—"Let her alone, mother!" interrupted Robert; "she must choose for herself!" and, for a few moments, there was a dead silence. Robert stood, leaning against the wall, pale as marble, his eyes cast down, and his lips compressed, in a state of forced composure. Mrs. Kent, her head turning, now towards the bank-notes, and now towards her son, was in a state of restless and uncontrollable instability; Mary clung, crying, about her mother; and Susan, her colour varying, and her lips quivering, sate, unconsciously, twisting and untwisting the bank-notes in her hand.

"Well, Susan!" said the artist, who had remained in tranquil expectation, surveying the group with his falcon eye, "Well, Susan! have you determined?"—The colour rose to her temples, and she answered firmly, "Yes, sir: be pleased to take back the notes. I love nobody but Robert; and Robert loves me dearly, dearly! I know he does! Oh Mrs. Kent! you would not have me vex Robert, your own dear son, and he so ill,—would you? Let them take these things! they never can be so cruel as to put you in prison—you, who were always so kind to every body; and he will work for you! and I will work for you! Never mind being poor! better any thing than be false-hearted to my Robert!" "God for ever bless you, my Susan!" "God bless you, my dear child!" burst at once, from Robert and his mother, as they, alternately, folded her in their arms.

"Pray take the notes, sir," repeated Susan, after a short interval. "No! that I will not do," replied the stranger, smiling. "The notes shall be yours,—are yours—and what is more, on my own conditions. Meet me at church to-morrow morning, and I shall have the pleasure of bestowing this pretty hand, as I always intended, on my good friend, Robert, here. I have a wife of my own at home, my dear, whom I would not exchange even for you; and I am quite rich enough to afford myself the luxury of making you happy. Besides, you have a claim to the money. These very bank-notes were gained by that sweet face! Your friend, Mr. Lescombe, Robert, has purchased the hay-carrying! We have had a good deal of talk about you, and I am quite certain that he will provide for you all. No thanks!" continued he, interrupting something that Robert was going to say,—"No thanks! no apologies! I won't hear a word. Meet me at church to-morrow! but, remember, young man, no more jealousy!" and, followed by a glance from Susan, of which Robert might have been jealous, the artist left the shop.

OUR MAYING.

As party produces party, and festival brings forth festival in higher life, so one scene of rural festivity is pretty sure to be followed by another. The boys' cricket-match at Whitsuntide, which was won most triumphantly by

our parish, and luckily passed off without giving cause for a coroner's inquest, or indeed without injury of any sort, except the demolition of Amos Stone's new straw-hat, the crown of which (Amos's head being fortunately at a distance,) was fairly struck out by the cricket-ball; this match produced one between our eleven and the players of the neighbouring hamlet of Whitley; and being patronised by the young lord of the manor and several of the gentry round, and followed by jumping in sacks, riding donkey-races, grinning through horse-collars, and other diversions more renowned for their antiquity than their elegance, gave such general satisfaction, that it was resolved to hold a Maying in full form in Whitley-wood.

Now this wood of ours happens to be a common of twenty acres, with three trees on it, and the Maying was fixed to be held between hay-time and harvest; but "what 's in a name?" Whitley-wood is a beautiful piece of greensward, surrounded on three sides by fields, and farm-houses, and cottages, and woody uplands, and on the other by a fine park; and the May-house was erected, and the May-games held in the beginning of July; the very season of leaves and roses, when the days are at the longest, and the weather at the finest, and the whole world is longing to get out of doors. Moreover, the whole festival was aided, not impeded, by the gentlemen amateurs, headed by that very genial person, our young lord of the manor; whilst the business part of the affair was confided to the well-known diligence, zeal, activity, and intelligence of that most popular of village landlords, mine host of the Rose. How could a Maying fail under such auspices? Every body expected more sunshine and more fun, more flowers and more laughing, than ever was known at a rustic merry-making—and really considering the manner in which expectation had been raised, the quantity of disappointment has been astonishingly small.

Landlord Sims, the master of the revels, and our very good neighbour, is a portly, bustling man, of five-and-forty, or thereabout, with a hale, jovial visage, a merry eye, a pleasant smile, and a general air of good-fellowship. This last qualification, whilst it serves greatly to recommend his ale, is apt to mislead superficial observers, who generally account him a sort of slenderer Boniface, and imagine that, like that renowned hero of the spigot, Master Sims eats, drinks, and sleeps on his own anno domini. They never were more mistaken in their lives; no soberer man than Master Sims within twenty miles! Except for the good of the house, he no more thinks of drinking beer, than a grocer of eating figs. To be sure when the jug lags he will take a hearty pull, just by way of example, and to set the good ale agoing. But in general, he trusts to subtler and more delicate modes of quickening its circulation. A good song, a good story, a merry jest, a hearty laugh, and a most winning habit of assentation; these are his implements. There is not a better companion, or a more judicious listener in the county. His pliability is astonishing. He shall say yes to twenty different opinions on the same subject, within the hour; and so honest and cordial does his agreement seem, that no one of his customers, whether drunk or sober, ever dreams of doubting his sincerity. The hottest conflict of politics never puzzles him: Whig or Tory, he is both, or either—"the happy Mercutio, that curses both houses." Add to this gift of conformity, a cheerful, easy temper, an alacrity of attention, a zealous desire to please, which gives to his duties, as a landlord, all the grace of hospitality, and a perpetual civility and kindness, even when he has nothing to gain by them; and no one can wonder at Master Sims's popularity.

After his good wife's death, this popularity began to extend itself in a remarkable manner amongst the females of the neighbourhood: smitten with his portly person, his smooth, oily manner, and a certain soft, earnest, whispering voice, which he generally assumes when addressing one of the fairer sex, and which seems to make his very "how d'ye do" confidential and complimentary. Moreover, it was thought that the good landlord was well to do in the world, and though Betsy and Letty were good little girls, quick, civil, and active, yet, poor things, what could such young girls know of a house like the Rose? All would go to rack and ruin without the eye of a mistress! Master Sims must look out for a wife. So thought the whole female world, and, apparently, Master Sims began to think so himself.

The first fair one to whom his attention was directed, was a rosy, pretty widow, a pastry-cook of the next town, who arrived in our village on a visit to her cousin, the baker, for the purpose of giving confectionary lessons to his wife. Nothing was ever so hot as that courtship. During the week that the lady of pie-crust staid, her lover almost lived in the oven. One would have thought that he was learning to make the cream-tarts without pepper, by which Bedreddin Hassan regained his state and his princess. It would be a most suitable match, as all the parish agreed; the widow, for as pretty as she was, (and one sha'n't often see a pleasanter, open countenance, or a sweeter smile,) being within ten years as old as her suitor, and having had two husbands already. A most proper and suitable match, said every body; and when our landlord carried her back to B. in his new-painted green cart, all the village agreed that they were gone to be married, and the ringers were just setting up a peal, when Master Sims returned alone, single, crest-fallen, de-

jected; the bells stopped of themselves, and we heard no more of the pretty pastry-cook. For three months after that rebuff, mine host, albeit not addicted to aversions, testified an equal dislike to women and tartlets, widows and plum-cake. Even poor Alice Taylor, whose travelling basket of lollypops and gingerbread he had whilome patronized, was forbidden the house; and not a bun or a biscuit could be had at the Rose, for love or money.

The fit, however, wore off in time; and he began again to follow the advice of his neighbours, and to look out for a wife, up street and down; whilst at each extremity a fair object presented herself, from neither of whom he had the slightest reason to dread a repetition of the repulse which he had experienced from the blooming widow. The down-street lady was a widow also, the portly, comely relict of our drunken village blacksmith, who, in spite of her joy at her first husband's death, and an old spite at mine host of the Rose, to whose good ale and good company she was wont to ascribe most of the aberrations of the deceased, began to find her shop, her journeymen, and her eight children (six unruly obstreperous pickles of boys, and two tom-boys of girls,) rather more than a lone woman could manage, and to sigh for a helpmate to ease her of her cares, collect the boys at night, see the girls to school of a morning, break the larger imps of running away to revels and fairs, and the smaller fry of birds'-nesting and orchard-robbing, and bear a part in the lectures and chastisements, which she deemed necessary to preserve the young rebels from the bad end which she predicted to them twenty times a day. Master Sims was the coadjutor on whom she had inwardly pitched; and, accordingly, she threw out broad hints to that effect, every time she had encountered him, which, in the course of her search for boys and girls, who were sure to be missing at school-time and bed-time, happened pretty often; and Mr. Sims was far too gallant and too much in the habit of assenting to listen unmoved; for really the widow was a fine, tall, comely woman; and the whispers, and smiles, and hand-pressings, when they happened to meet, were becoming very tender; and his admonitions and head-shakings, addressed to the young crew (who, nevertheless, all liked him) quite fatherly. This was his down-street flame.

The rival lady was Miss Lydia Day, the carpenter's sister; a slim, upright maiden, not remarkable for beauty, and not quite so young as she had been, who, on inheriting a small annuity from the mistress with whom she had spent the best of her days, retired to her native village to live on her means. A genteel, demure, quiet personage, was Miss Lydia Day; much addicted to snuff and green tea, and not averse from a little gentle scandal—for the rest, a good sort of woman, and *un très bon parti* for Master Sims, who seemed to consider it a profitable speculation, and made love to her whenever she happened to come into his head, which, it must be confessed, was hardly so often as her merits and her annuity deserved. Remiss as he was, he had no lack of encouragement to complain of—for she "to hear would seriously incline," and put on her best silk, and her best simper, and lighted up her faded complexion into something approaching to a blush, whenever he came to visit her. And this was Master Sims's up-street love.

So stood affairs at the Rose when the day of the Maying arrived; and the double flirtation, which, however dexterously managed, must have been, sometimes, one would think, rather inconvenient to the inamorato, proved on this occasion extremely useful. Each of the fair ladies contributed her aid to the festival; Miss Lydia by tying up sentimental garlands for the May-house, and scolding the carpenters into diligence in the erection of the booths; the widow by giving her whole bevy of boys and girls a holiday, and turning them loose on the neighbourhood to collect flowers as they could. Very useful auxiliaries were these light foragers; they scoured the country far and near—irresistible mendicants!—pardonable thieves!—coming to no harm, poor children, except that little George got a black eye in tumbling from the top of an acacia tree at the park, and that Sam (he's a sad pickle is Sam!) narrowly escaped a horse-whipping from the head gardener at the Hall, who detected a bunch of his new rhododendron, the only plant in the country, forming the very crown and centre of the May-pole. Little harm did they do, poor children, with all their pilfery; and when they returned, covered with their flowery loads, like the May-day figure called "Jack of the Green," they worked at the Garlands and the May-houses, as none but children ever do work, putting all their young life and their untiring spirit of noise and motion into their pleasant labour. Oh, the din of that building! Talk of the tower of Babel! that was a quiet piece of masonry compared to the May-house of Whitley-wood, with its walls of leaves and flowers—and its canvass booths at either end for refreshments and musicians. Never was known more joyous note of preparation.

The morning rose more quietly—I had almost said more dully—and promised ill for the *fête*. The sky was gloomy, the wind cold, and the green filled as slowly as a balloon seems to do when one is watching it. The entertainments of the day were to begin with a cricket-match (two elevens to be chosen on the ground), and the wickets pitched at twelve o'clock precisely. Twelve o'clock came—but no cricketers—except, indeed, some two or three punctual and impatient gentlemen;

one o'clock came, and brought no other reinforcement than two or three more of our young Etonians and Wykhamites — less punctual than their precursors, but not a whit less impatient. Very provoking, certainly—but not very uncommon. Your country cricketer, the peasant, the mere rustic, does love, on these occasions, to keep his betters waiting, if only to display his power; and when we consider that it is the one solitary opportunity in which importance can be felt and vanity gratified, we must acknowledge it to be perfectly in human nature that a few airs should be shown. Accordingly, our best players held aloof. Tom Coper would not come to the ground; Joel Brent came, indeed, but would not play; Samuel long coquetted — he would and he would not. Very provoking, certainly! Then two young farmers, a tall brother and a short, Hampshire men, cricketers born, whose good-humour and love of the game rendered them sure cards, had been compelled to go on business—the one, ten miles south—the other, fifteen north—that very morning. No playing without the Goddards! No sign of either of them on the B—— road or the F——. Most intolerably provoking, beyond a doubt! Master Sims tried his best coaxing and his best double X on the recusant players; but all in vain. In short, there was great danger of the match going off altogether; when, about two o'clock, Amos Stone, who was there with the crown of his straw hat sewed in wrong side outward—new thatched, as it were—and who had been set to watch the B—— highway, gave notice that something was coming as tall as the Maypole—which something turned out to be the long Goddard, and his brother approaching at the same moment in the opposite direction, hope, gaiety, and good-humour revived again; and two elevens, including Amos and another urchin of his calibre, were formed on the spot.

I never saw a prettier match. The gentlemen, the Goddards, and the boys being equally divided, the strength and luck of the parties were so well balanced, that it produced quite a neck-and-neck race, won only by two notches. Amos was completely the hero of the day, standing out half of his side, and getting five notches at one hit. His side lost — but so many of his opponents gave him their ribbons (have not I said that Master Sims bestowed a set of ribbons?) that the straw hat was quite covered with purple trophies; and Amos, stalking about the ground, with a shy and awkward vanity, looked with his decorations like the sole conqueror — the Alexander or Napoleon of the day. The boy did not speak a word; but every now and then he displayed a set of huge white teeth in a grin of inexpressible delight. By far the happiest and proudest personage at that Maying was Amos Stone.

By the time the cricket-match was over, the world began to be gay at Whitley-wood. Carts and gigs, and horses and carriages, and people of all sorts, arrived from all quarters; and, lastly, "the blessed sun himself" made his appearance, adding a triple lustre to the scene. Fiddlers, ballad-singers, cake-baskets —Punch—Master Frost, crying cherries — a Frenchman with dancing dogs — a Bavarian woman selling brooms — half-a-dozen stalls with fruit and frippery — and twenty noisy games of quoits, and bowls, and ninepins—boys throwing at boxes—girls playing at ball —gave to the assemblage the bustle, clatter, and gaiety of a Dutch fair, as one sees it in Teniers' pictures. Plenty of drinking and smoking on the green—plenty of eating in the booths: the gentlemen cricketers, at one end, dining off a round of beef, which made the table totter—the players, at the other, supping off a gammon of bacon—Amos Stone crammed at both—and Landlord Sims bustling everywhere with an activity that seemed to confer upon him the gift of ubiquity, assisted by the little light-footed maidens, his daughters, all smiles and curtsies, and by a pretty black-eyed young woman—name unknown, with whom, even in the midst of his hurry, he found time, as it seemed to me, for a little philandering. What would the widow and Miss Lydia have said? But they remained in happy ignorance —the one drinking tea in most decorous primness in a distant marquée, disliking to mingle with so mixed an assembly,—the other in full chase after the most unlucky of all her urchins, the boy called Sam, who had gotten into a *démêlé* with a showman, in consequence of mimicking the wooden gentleman Punch, and his wife Judy—thus, as the showman observed, bringing his exhibition into disrepute.

Meanwhile, the band struck up in the May-house, and the dance, after a little demur, was fairly set afloat—an honest English country dance—(there had been some danger of waltzing and quadrilling)—with ladies and gentlemen at the top, and country lads and lasses at the bottom; a happy mixture of cordial kindness on the one hand, and pleased respect on the other. It was droll though to see the beplumed and beflowered French hats, the silks and the furbelows sailing and rustling amidst the straw bonnets and cotton gowns of the humbler dancers; and not less so to catch a glimpse of the little lame clerk, shabbier than ever, peeping through the canvass opening of the booth, with a grin of ineffable delight, over the shoulder of our vicar's pretty wife. Really, considering that Mabel Green and Jem Tanner were standing together at that moment at the top of the set, so deeply engaged in making love that they forgot when they ought to begin, and that the little clerk must have seen them, I cannot help taking his grin for a favourable omen to those faithful lovers.

Well, the dance finished, the sun went down, and we departed. The Maying is over, the

booths carried away, and the May-house demolished. Every thing has fallen into its old position, except the love affairs of Landlord Sims. The pretty lass with the black eyes, who first made her appearance at Whitleywood, is actually staying at the Rose Inn, on a visit to his daughters; and the village talk goes that she is to be the mistress of that thriving hostelry, and the wife of its master; and both her rivals are jealous, after their several fashions—the widow in the tantrums, the maiden in the dumps. Nobody knows exactly who the black-eyed damsel may be,—but she's young, and pretty, and civil, and modest; and, without intending to depreciate the merits of either of her competitors, I cannot help thinking that our good neighbour has shown his taste.

AN ADMIRAL ON SHORE.

I do not know any moment in which the two undelightful truisms, which we are all so ready to admit and to run away from, the quick progress of time and the instability of human events, are brought before us with a more uncomfortable consciousness than that of visiting, after a long absence, a house with whose former inhabitants we had been on terms of intimacy. The feeling is still more unpleasant when it comes to us unexpectedly and finds us unprepared, as has happened to me to-day.

A friend requested me this morning to accompany her to call on her little girl, whom she had recently placed at the Belvidere, a new and celebrated boarding-school — I beg pardon! — establishment for young ladies, about ten miles off. We set out accordingly, and my friend being a sort of person in whose company one is apt to think little of any thing but herself, had proceeded to the very gate of the Belvidere before I had at all recollected the road we were travelling, when in our momentary stop at the entrance of the lawn, I at once recognised the large substantial mansion, surrounded by magnificent oaks and elms, whose shadow lay broad and heavy on the grass in the bright sun of August; the copse-like shrubbery, which sunk with a pretty natural wildness to a dark clear pool, the ha ha, which parted the pleasure-ground from the open common, and the beautiful country which lay like a panorama beyond — in a word, I knew at a glance, in spite of the disguise of its new appellation, the White House at Hannonby, where ten years ago I had so often visited my good old friend Admiral Floyd.

The place had undergone other transmogrifications besides its change of name; in particular, it had gained a few prettinesses and had lost much tidiness. A new rustic bench, a green-house, and a verandah, may be laid to the former score; a torn book left littering on the seat, a broken swing dangling from the trees, a skipping-rope on the grass, and a straw bonnet on a rose-bush, to the latter; besides which, the lawn which, under the naval reign, had been kept almost as smooth as water, was now in complete neglect, the turf in some places growing into grass, in others trodden quite bare by the continual movement of little rapid feet; leaves lay under the trees; weeds were on the gravel; and dust upon the steps. And in two or three chosen spots small fairy gardens had been cribbed from the shrubberies, where seedy mignionette and languishing sweet peas, and myrtles over-watered, and geraniums, trained as never geraniums were trained before, gave manifest tokens of youthful gardening. None of the inhabitants were visible, but it was evidently a place gay and busy with children, devoted to their sports and their exercise. As we neared the mansion, the sounds and sights of school-children became more obvious. Two or three pianos were jingling in different rooms, a guitar tinkling, and a harp twanging: a din of childish voices, partly French partly English, issued from one end of the house; and a foreign looking figure advanced from the other; whom, from his silk stockings, his upright carriage, and the boy who followed him carrying his kit, I set down for the dancing-master; whilst in an upstair apartment were two or three rosy laughing faces, enjoying the pleasure of disobedience in peeping out of window, one of which faces disappeared the moment it caught sight of the carriage, and was in an other instant hanging round its mother's neck in the hall. I could not help observing to the governess, who also met us there, that it was quite shocking to think how often disobedience prospers amongst these little people. If Miss Emily had not been peeping out of the window when we drove up to the door, she would have been at least two minutes later in kissing her dear mamma — a remark to which the little girl assented very heartily, and at which her accomplished preceptress tried to look grave.

Leaving Emily with her mother, I sallied forth on the lawn to reconnoitre old scenes and recollect old times. My first visit especially forced itself on my remembrance. It had been made, like this, under the sultry August sun. We then lived within walking distance, and I had been proceeding hither to call on our new neighbours, Admiral and Mrs. Floyd, when a very unaccountable noise on the lawn induced me to pause at the entrance; a moment's observation explained the nature of the sounds. The admiral was shooting wasps with a pocket-pistol; a most villanous amusement, as it seemed to me, who am by nature and habit a hater of such poppery, and indeed of all noises which are at once sudden

and unexpected. My first impulse was to run away, and I had actually made some motions towards a retreat, when, struck with the ludicrous nature of the sport, and the folly of being frightened at a sort of squibbery, which even the unusual game (though the admiral was a capital marksman, and seldom failed to knock down his insect) did not seem to regard, I faced about manfully, and contenting myself with putting my hands to my ears to keep out the sound, remained at a very safe distance to survey the scene. There, under the shade of the tall elms, sate the veteran, a little old withered man, very like a pocket-pistol himself, brown, succinct, grave, and fiery. He wore an old-fashioned naval uniform of blue, faced with white, which set off his mahogany countenance, drawn into a thousand deep wrinkles, so that his face was as full of lines as if it had been tattooed, with the full force of contrast. At his side stood a very tall, masculine, large-boned middle-aged woman, something like a man in petticoats, whose face, in spite of a quantity of rouge and a small portion of modest assurance, might still be called handsome, and could never be mistaken for belonging to other than an Irish woman. There was a touch of the brogue in her very look. She, evidently his wife, stood by marking the covies, and enjoying as it seemed to me, the smell of gunpowder, to which she had the air of being quite as well accustomed as the admiral. A younger lady was watching them at a little distance, apparently as much amused as myself, and far less frightened; on her advancing to meet me, the pistol was put down, and the admiral joined us. This was my first introduction; we were acquainted in a moment, and before the end of my visit he had shown me all over his house, and told me the whole history of his life and adventures.

In these there was nothing remarkable, excepting their being so entirely of the sea. Some sixty-five years before, he had come into the world in the middle of the British channel, whilst his mother was taking a little trip from Portsmouth to Plymouth on board her husband's flag-ship, (for he too had been an admiral,) when, rather before he was expected, our admiral was born. This *début* fixed his destiny. At twelve years old he went to sea, and had remained there ever since, till now, when an unlucky promotion sent him ashore, and seemed likely to keep him there. I never saw a man so unaffectedly displeased with his own title. He forbade any of his family from calling him by it, and took it as a sort of affront from strangers.

Being, however, on land, his first object was to make his residence as much like a man-of-war as possible, or rather as much like that *beau-idéal* of a habitation his last frigate, the Mermaiden, in which he had by different prizes made above sixty thousand pounds. By that standard his calculations were regulated; all the furniture of the White House at Hannonby was adapted to the proportions of His Majesty's ship the Mermaiden. The great drawing-room was fitted up exactly on the model of her cabin, and the whole of that spacious and commodious mansion made to resemble, as much as possible, that wonderfully inconvenient abode, the inside of a ship; every thing crammed into the smallest possible compass; space most unnecessarily economized, and contrivances devised for all those matters which need no contriving at all. He victualled the house as for an East-India voyage, served out the provisions in rations, and swung the whole family in hammocks.

It will easily be believed that these innovations, in a small village in a midland county, where nineteen-twentieths of the inhabitants had never seen a piece of water larger than Hannonby great pond, occasioned no small commotion. The poor admiral had his own troubles. At first every living thing about the place rebelled — there was a general mutiny; the very cocks and hens whom he had crammed up in coops in the poultry-yard screamed aloud for liberty; and the pigs, ducks, and geese, equally prisoners, squeaked and gabbled for water; the cows lowed in their stall — the sheep bleated in their pens, the whole live stock of Hannonby was in durance.

The most unmanageable of these complainers were of course the servants: with the men, after a little while, he got on tolerably, sternness and grog (the wind and sun of the fable) conquered them; his stanchest opponents were of the other sex, the whole tribe of housemaids and kitchenmaids abhorred him to a woman, and plagued and thwarted him every hour of the day. He, on his part, returned their aversion with interest; talked of female stupidity, female awkwardness, and female dirt, and threatened to compound an household of the crew of the Mermaiden, that should shame all the twirlers of mops and brandishers of brooms in the county. Especially, he used to vaunt the abilities of a certain Bill Jones, as the best laundress, sempstress, cook, and housemaid in the navy; him he was determined to procure, to keep his refractory household in some order; accordingly, he wrote to desire his presence; and Bill, unable to resist the summons of his old commander, arrived accordingly.

This Avatar, which had been anticipated by the revolted damsels with no small dismay, tended considerably to ameliorate matters. The dreaded major-domo turned out to be a smart young sailor, of four or five-and-twenty, with an arch smile, a bright merry eye, and a most knowing nod, by no means insensible to female objurgation, or indifferent to female charms. The women of the house, particularly the pretty ones, soon perceived their power; and as this Admirable Crichton of his Majesty's ship the Mermaiden, had, amongst

his other accomplishments, the address completely to govern his master, all was soon in the smoothest track possible. Neither, universal genius though he were, was Bill Jones at all disdainful of female assistance, or averse to the theory of a division of labour. Under his wise direction and discreet patronage, a peace was patched up between the admiral and his rebellious handmaids. A general amnesty was proclaimed, with the solitary exception of an old crone of a she-cook, who had, on some occasion of culinary interference, turned her master out of his own kitchen, and garnished Bill Jones's jacket with an unseemly rag yclept a dish-clout. She was dismissed by mutual consent; and Sally the kitchenmaid, a pretty black-eyed girl, promoted to the vacant post, which she filled with eminent ability.

Soothed, guided, and humoured by his trusty adherent, and influenced perhaps a little by the force of example and the effect of the land breeze, which he had never breathed so long before, our worthy veteran soon began to show symptoms of a man of this world. The earth became, so to say, his native element. He took to gardening, to farming, for which Bill Jones had also a taste; set free his prisoners in the *basse-cour*, to the unutterable glorification and crowing of cock and hen, and cackling and gabbling of goose and turkey, and enlarged his own walk from pacing backwards and forwards in the dining-room, followed by his old shipmates, a Newfoundland dog and a tame goat, into a stroll round his own grounds, to the great delight of those faithful attendants. He even talked of going pheasant shooting, bought a hunter, and was only saved from following the fox-hounds by accidentally taking up Peregrine Pickle, which, by a kind of Sortes Virgilianæ, opened on the mischances of Lieutenant Hatchway and Commodore Trunnion in a similar expedition.

After this warning which he considered as nothing less than providential, he relinquished any attempt at mounting that formidable animal, a horse, but having found his land legs, he was afoot all day long in his farm or his garden, setting people to rights in all quarters, and keeping up the place with the same scrupulous nicety that he was wont to bestow on the planks and rigging of his dear Mermaiden. Amongst the country people, he soon became popular. They liked the testy little gentleman, who dispensed his beer and grog so bountifully, and talked to them so freely. He would have his own way, to be sure, but then he paid for it; besides, he entered into their tastes and amusements, promoted May-games, revels, and other country sports, patronized dancing-dogs and monkeys, and bespoke plays in barns. Above all, he had an exceeding partiality to vagrants, strollers, gipsies, and such like persons; listened to their tales with a delightful simplicity of belief; pitied them; relieved them; fought their battles at the bench and the vestry, and got into two or three scrapes with constables and magistrates, by the activity of his protection. Only one counterfeit sailor with a sham wooden-leg, he found out at a question, and, by aid of Bill Jones, ducked in the horse-pond, for an impostor, till the unlucky wretch, who was, as the worthy seaman suspected, totally unused to the water, a thorough land-lubber, was nearly drowned; an adventure which turned out the luckiest of his life, he having carried his case to an attorney, who forced the admiral to pay fifty pounds for the exploit.

Our good veteran was equally popular amongst the gentry of the neighbourhood. His own hospitality was irresistible, and his frankness and simplicity, mixed with a sort of petulant vivacity, combined to make him a most welcome relief to the dulness of a country dinner party. He enjoyed society extremely, and even had a spare bed erected for company; moved thereunto by an accident which befel the fat Rector of Kinton, who having unfortunately consented to sleep at Hannonby one wet night, had alarmed the whole house, and nearly broken his own neck, by a fall from his hammock. The admiral would have put up twenty spare beds, if he could have been sure of filling them, for besides his natural sociability, he was, it must be confessed, in spite of his farming, and gardening, and keeping a log-book, a good deal at a loss how to fill up his time. His reading was none of the most extensive: Robinson Crusoe, the Naval Chronicle, Southey's admirable life of Nelson, and Smollet's novels, formed the greater part of his library; and for other books he cared little; though he liked well enough to pore over maps and charts, and to look at modern voyages, especially if written by landsmen or ladies; and his remarks on those occasions often displayed a talent for criticism, which, under different circumstances, might have ripened into a very considerable reviewer.

For the rest, he was a most kind and excellent person, although a little testy and not a little absolute; and a capital disciplinarian, although addicted to the reverse sins of making other people tipsy whilst he kept himself sober, and of sending forth oaths in volleys, whilst he suffered none other to swear. He had besides a few prejudices incident to his condition—loved his country to the point of hating all the rest of the world, especially the French; and regarded his own profession with a pride which made him intolerant of every other. To the army he had an intense and growing hatred, much augmented since victory upon victory had deprived him of the comfortable feeling of scorn. The battle of Waterloo fairly posed him. "To be sure to have drubbed the French was a fine thing—a

very fine thing — no denying that! but why not have fought out the quarrel by sea?"

I made no mention of Mrs. Floyd in enumerating the admiral's domestic arrangements, because, sooth to say, no one could have less concern in them than that good lady. She had not been Mrs. Floyd for five-and-twenty years without thoroughly understanding her husband's despotic humour, and her own light and happy temper enabled her to conform to it without the slightest appearance of reluctance or discontent. She liked to be managed —it saved her trouble. She turned out to be Irish as I had suspected. The admiral, who had reached the age of forty without betraying the slightest symptom of matrimony, had, during a sojourn in Cork Harbour, fallen in love with her, then a buxom widow, and married her in something less than three weeks after their acquaintance began, chiefly moved to that unexpected proceeding by the firmness with which she bore a salute from the Lord Lieutenant, which threw half the ladies on board into hysterics.

Mrs. Floyd was indeed as gallant a woman as ever stood fire. Her first husband had been an officer in the army, and she had followed the camp during two campaigns; had been in one battle and several skirmishes, and had been taken and re-taken with the carriages and baggage, without betraying the slightest symptom of fear. Her naval career did not shame her military reputation. She lived chiefly on board, adopted sea phrases and sea customs, and but for the petticoat might have passed for a sailor herself.

And of all the sailors that ever lived, she was the merriest, the most generous, the most unselfish; the very kindest of that kindest race! There was no getting away from her hearty hospitality, no escaping her prodigality of presents. It was dangerous to praise or even to approve of any thing belonging to herself in her hearing; if it had been the carpet under her feet, or the shawl on her shoulders, either would instantly have been stripped off to offer. Then her exquisite good-humour! Coarse and boisterous she certainly was, and terribly Irish; but the severest stickler for female decorum, the nicest critic of female manners, would have been disarmed by the contagion of Mrs. Floyd's good-humour.

My chief friend and favourite of the family was, however, one who hardly seemed to belong to it—Anne, the eldest daughter. I liked her even better than I did her father and mother, although for very different qualities. She was "inland bred," and combined in herself sufficient self-possession and knowledge of the world, of literature, and of society, to have set up the whole house, provided it had been possible to supply their deficiency from her superabundance; she was three or four-and-twenty, too, past the age of mere young-ladyism, and entirely unaccomplished, if she could be called so, who joined to the most elegant manners a highly-cultivated understanding, and a remarkable talent for conversation. Nothing could exceed the fascination of her delicate and poignant raillery, her voice and smile were so sweet, and her wit so light and glancing. She had the still rarer merit of being either entirely free from vanity, or of keeping it in such good order, that it never appeared in look or word. Conversation, much as she excelled in it, was not necessary to her, as it is to most eminent talkers. I think she enjoyed quiet observation, full as much, if not more; and at such times there was something of good-humoured malice in her bright hazel eye, that spoke more than she ever allowed her tongue to utter. Her father's odd ways, for instance, and her mother's odd speeches, and her sister's lack-a-daisicalness, amused her rather more than they ought to have done; but she had never lived with them, having been brought up by an aunt who had recently died leaving her a splendid fortune; and even now that she had come to reside at home, was treated by her parents, although very kindly, rather as an honoured guest than as a cherished daughter.

Anne Floyd was a sweet creature in spite of a little over-acuteness. I used to think she wanted nothing but falling in love to soften her proud spirit, and tame her bright eye; but falling in love was quite out of her way—she had the unfortunate distrust of an heiress, satiated with professions of attachment, and suspecting every man of wooing her fortune rather than herself. By dint of hearing exaggerated praise of her beauty, she had even come to think herself plain; perhaps another circumstance a little contributed to this persuasion—she was said to be, and undoubtedly was, remarkably like her father. There is no accounting for the strange freaks that nature plays in the matter of family likeness. The admiral was certainly as ugly a little man as one should see in a summer day, and Anne was as certainly a very pretty young woman: yet it was quite impossible to see them together and not be struck with the extreme and even absurd resemblance between his old battered face and her bright and sparkling countenance. To have been so like my good friend the admiral, might have cured a lighter spirit of vanity.

Julia, the younger and favourite daughter, was a fine tall handsome girl of nineteen, just what her mother must have been at the same age; she had been entirely brought up by Mrs. Floyd, except when deposited from time to time in various country boarding-schools, whilst that good lady enjoyed the pleasure of a cruise. Miss Julia exhibited the not uncommon phenomenon of having imbibed the opposite faults to those of her instructress, and was soft, mincing, languid, affected, and

full of airs and graces of the very worst sort; but I don't know that she was much more ignorant and silly than a girl of nineteen, with a neglected education, must needs be; and she had the farther excuse of being a spoiled child. Her father doated upon her, and thought her the most accomplished young woman of the age; for certain, she could play a little, and sing a little, and paint a little, and talk a little very bad French, and dance and dress a great deal. She had also cultivated her mind by reading all the love-stories and small poetry that came in her way; corresponded largely with half-a-dozen bosom friends picked up at her different seminaries: and even aspired to the character of authoress, having actually perpetrated a sonnet to the moon, which sonnet, contrary to the well-known recipe of Boileau and the ordinary practice of all nations, contained eighteen lines, four quatrains, and a couplet; a prodigality of words which the fair poetess endeavoured to counterbalance by a corresponding sparingness of idea. There was no harm in Julia, poor thing, with all her affectation. She was really warm-hearted and well-tempered, and might have improved under her sister's kind and judicious management, but for a small accident which interrupted the family harmony, and eventually occasioned their removal from Hannonby.

The admiral, always addicted to favouritism, had had under his protection, from boyhood to manhood, one youth of remarkable promise. He had been his first-lieutenant on board the Mermaiden, and was now, at three-and-twenty, a master and commander; which promotion, although it ejected him from that paragon of frigates, the young captain did not seem to think so great an evil as the admiral had found his advancement. He was invited to the White House forthwith; and the gallant veteran, who seldom took the trouble to conceal any of his purposes, soon announced that Captain Claremont was his intended son-in-law, and that Miss Julia was the destined bride.

The gentleman arrived, and did as much honour to the admiral's taste as his other favourite Bill Jones. Captain Claremont was really a very fine young man, with the best part of beauty, figure and countenance, and a delightful mixture of frankness and feeling, of spirit and gaiety, in his open and gentlemanly manners; he was, at a word, just the image that one conjures up when thinking of a naval officer. His presence added greatly to the enjoyment of the family; the admiral "fought his battles over again," and so did his lady, who talked and laughed all day long: Anne watched the proceedings with evident amusement, and looked even archer than usual; whilst Julia, the heroine of the scene, behaved as is customary in such cases, walked about exquisitely dressed, with a book in her hand, or reclined in a picturesque attitude expecting to be made love to; and Captain Claremont, who had never seen either sister before, pleased with Julia's beauty, and a little alarmed at Anne's wit, appeared in a fair way of losing his heart in the proper quarter. In short, the flirtation seemed going on very prosperously; and the admiral in high glee, vented divers sea jokes on the supposed lovers, and chuckled over the matter to Bill Jones, who winked and grinned and nodded responsively.

After a few weeks that sagacious adherent began to demur — "Things seemed," as he observed, "rather at a stand-still — the courtship was a deal slacker, and his honour, the captain, had talked of heaving anchor, and sailing off for Lincolnshire." To this the admiral answered nothing but "tush!" and "pshaw!" and as the captain actually relinquished, with very little pressing, his design of leaving Hannonby, Bill Jones's suspicions did seem a little super-subtle. Bill, however, at the end of ten days, retained his opinion. "For certain," he said, "Miss Julia had all the signs of liking upon her, and moped and hung her head and talked to herself like the negro who drowned himself for love on board the Mermaiden; and the captain, he could not say but he might be in love — he was very much fallen away since he had been in that latitude — had lost his spunk, and was become extraordinarily forgetsome,—he might be in love, likely enough, but not with Miss Julia — he was sure to sheer away from her; never spoke to her at breakfast or dinner, and would tack a hundred ways not to meet her, whilst he was always following in the wake of Miss Anne; and she (Miss Julia) had taken to writing long letters again, and to walking the terrace between the watches, and did not seem to care for the captain. He could not make the matter out. Miss Anne, indeed"— Here the admiral, to whom the possibility of a failure in his favourite scheme had never occurred, interrupted his confidant by a thousand exclamations of "ass! blockhead! lubber!" to which tender appellations, that faithful satellite made no other reply than a shake of the head as comprehensive as Lord Burleigh's.

The next morning vindicated Bill's sagacity. Anne, who, for obvious reasons, had taken the task upon herself, communicated to her father that Captain Claremont had proposed to her, and that she had accepted his offer. The admiral was furious, but Anne, though very mild, was very firm; she would not give up her lover, nor would her lover relinquish her; and Julia, when appealed to, asserted her female privilege of white-lying, and declared, that if there was not another man in the world, she would never have married Captain Claremont. The admiral, thwarted by every body, and compelled to submit for the first time in his life (except in the affair of his promotion

and that of the ducked sailor), stormed, and swore, and scolded all round, and refused to be pacified; Mrs. Floyd, to whom his fiat had seemed like fate, was frightened at the general temerity, and vented her unusual discomfort in scolding too; Anne took refuge in the house of a friend; and poor Julia, rejected by one party and lectured by the other, comforted herself by running away, one fine night, with a young officer of dragoons, with whom she had had an off-and-on correspondence for a twelvemonth. This elopement was the copestone of the admiral's misfortunes; he took a hatred to Hannonby, and left it forthwith; and it seemed as if he had left his anger behind him, for the next tidings we heard of the Floyds, Julia and her spouse were forgiven in spite of his soldiership, and the match had turned out far better than might have been expected; and Anne and her captain were in high favour, and the admiral gaily anticipating a flag-ship and a war, and the delight of bringing up his grandsons to be the future ornaments of the British navy.

THE QUEEN OF THE MEADOW.

In a winding unfrequented road, on the south side of our Village, close to a low, two-arched bridge, thrown across a stream of more beauty than consequence, stood the small irregular dwelling, and the picturesque buildings of Hatherford Mill. It was a pretty scene on a summer afternoon, was that old mill, with its strong lights and shadows, its low-browed cottage covered with the clustering Pyracantha, and the clear brook which, after dashing, and foaming, and brawling, and playing off all the airs of a mountain river, while pent up in the mill-stream, was no sooner let loose, than it subsided into its natural peaceful character, and crept quietly along the valley, meandering through the green woody meadows, as tranquil a trout stream, as ever Izaak Walton angled in.

Many a traveller has stayed his step to admire the old buildings of Hatherford Mill, backed by its dark orchard, especially when its accompanying figures, the jolly miller sitting before the door, pipe in mouth, and jug in hand, like one of Teniers' boors, the mealy miller's man with his white sack over his shoulders, carefully descending the out-of-door steps, and the miller's daughter, flitting about amongst her poultry, gave life and motion to the picture.

The scenery at the other end of the road was equally attractive, in a different style. Its principal feature was the great farm of the parish, an old manorial house, solid and venerable, with a magnificent clump of witch elms in front of the porch, a suburb of out-buildings behind, and an old-fashioned garden with its rows of espaliers, its wide flower-borders, and its close filbert-walk, stretching like a cape into the waters, the strawberry beds, sloping into the very stream; so that the cows, which, in sultry weather, came down by twos and by threes, from the opposite meadows, to cool themselves in the water, could almost crop the leaves as they stood.

In my mind, that was the pleasanter scene of the two; but such could hardly have been the general opinion, since nine out of ten passers-by never vouchsafed a glance at the great farm, but kept their eyes steadily fixed on the mill; perhaps to look at the old buildings, perhaps at the miller's young daughter.

Katy Dawson was accounted by common consent the prettiest girl in the parish. Female critics in beauty would be sure to limit the commendation by asserting that her features were irregular, that she had not a good feature in her face, and so forth; but these remarks were always made in her absence, and no sooner did she appear than even her critics felt the power of her exceeding loveliness. It was the Hebe look of youth and health, the sweet and joyous expression, and above all, the unrivalled brilliancy of colouring, that made Katy's face, with all its faults, so pleasant to look upon. A complexion of the purest white, a coral lip, and a cheek like the pear, her namesake, "on the side that's next the sun," were relieved by rich curls of brown hair, of the deep yet delicate hue that one sometimes finds in the ripest and latest hazel-nut of the season. Her figure was well suited to her blossomy countenance, round, short, and childlike; add to this, "a pretty foot, a merry glance, a passing pleasing tongue," and no wonder that Katy was the belle of the village.

But gay and smiling though she were, the fair maid of the mill was little accessible to wooers. Her mother had long been dead, and her father, who held her as the very apple of his eye, kept her carefully away from the rustic junketings, at which rural flirtations are usually begun. Accordingly our village beauty had reached the age of eighteen, without a lover. She had, indeed, had two offers; one from a dashing horse-dealer, who having seen her for five minutes one day, when her father called her to admire a nag that he was cheapening, proposed for her that very night as they were chaffering about the price, and took the refusal in such dudgeon, that he would have left the house utterly inconsolable, had he not contrived to comfort himself by cheating the offending papa, twice as much as he intended, in his horse bargain. The other proffer was from a staid, thick, sober, silent, middle-aged personage, who united the offices of schoolmaster and land-measurer, an old crony of the good miller's, in whose little parlour he had smoked his pipe regularly every Saturday evening for the last thirty years, and who

called him still from habit, "Young Sam Robinson." He, one evening as they sat together smoking, outside the door, broke his accustomed silence, with a formal demand of his comrade's permission to present himself as a suitor to Miss Katy; which permission being, as soon as her father could speak for astonishment, civilly refused, Master Samuel Robinson addressed himself to his pipe again, with his wonted phlegm, played a manful part in emptying the ale-jug, and discussing the Welsh rabbit, reappeared as usual, on the following Saturday, and to judge from his whole demeanour, seemed to have entirely forgotten his unlucky proposal.

Soon after the rejection of this most philosophical of all discarded swains, an important change took place in the neighbourhood, in the shape of a new occupant of the great farm. The quiet respectable old couple, who had resided there for half a century, had erected the mossy sun-dial, and planted the great mulberry-tree, having determined to retire from business, were succeeded by a new tenant from a distant county, the youngest son of a gentleman brought up to agricultural pursuits, whose spirit and activity, his boldness in stocking and cropping, and his scientific management of manures and machinery, formed the strongest possible contrast with the old-world practices of his predecessors. All the village was full of admiration of the intelligent young farmer, Edward Grey; who being unmarried, and of a kindly and sociable disposition, soon became familiar with high and low, and was nowhere a greater favourite than with his opposite neighbour, our good miller.

Katy's first feeling towards her new acquaintance, was an awe, altogether different from her usual shame-facedness; a genuine fear of the quickness and talent which broke out not merely in his conversation, but in every line of his acute and lively countenance. There was occasionally, a sudden laughing light in his hazel eye, and a very arch and momentary smile, now seen, and now gone, to which, becoming as most people thought them, she had a particular aversion. In short, she paid the young farmer, for so he persisted in being called, the compliment of running away, as soon as he came in sight, for three calendar months. At the end of that time, appearances mended. First she began to loiter at the door; then she staid in the room; then she listened; then she smiled; then she laughed outright; then she ventured to look up; then she began to talk in her turn: and before another month had past, would prattle to Edward Grey as fearlessly and freely, as to her own father.

On his side, it was clear that the young farmer, with all his elegance and refinement, his education and intelligence, liked nothing better than this simple village lass. He passed over the little humours, proper to her as a beauty and a spoiled child, with the kindness of an indulgent brother; was amused with her artlessness, and delighted with her gaiety. Gradually he began to find his own fireside lonely, and the parties of the neighbourhood boisterous; the little parlour of the miller formed just the happy medium, quietness without solitude, and society without dissipation — and thither he resorted accordingly. His spaniel Ranger, taking possession of the middle of the hearth-rug, just as comfortably as if in his master's own demesnes, and Katy's large tabby cat, a dog-hater by profession, not merely submitting to the usurpation, but even ceasing to erect her bristles on his approach.

So the world waned for three months more. One or two little miffs had, indeed, occurred between the parties; once, for instance, at a fair held in the next town on the first of May, Katy having been frightened at the lions and tigers painted outside a show, had nevertheless been half-led, half-forced into the booth to look at the real living monsters, by her ungallant beau. This was a sad offence. But unluckily our village damsel had been so much entertained by some monkeys and parrots on her first entrance, that she quite forgot to be frightened, and afterwards when confronted with the royal brutes, had taken so great a fancy to a beautiful panther, as to wish to have him for a pet; so that this quarrel passed away almost as soon as it began. The second was about the colour of a riband, an election riband; Katy having been much caught by the graceful person and gracious manners of a country candidate, who called to request her father's vote, had taken upon herself to canvass their opposite neighbour, and was exceedingly astonished to find her request refused, on no better plea, than a difference from her favourite in political opinion, and a previous promise to his opponent. The little beauty, astonished at her want of influence, and rendered zealous by opposition, began to look grave, and parties would certainly have run high at Hatherford, had not her candidate put a stop to the dispute, by declining to come to the poll. So that the quarrel was, per force, pretermitted. At last, a real and serious anxiety overclouded Katy's innocent happiness; and as it often happens, in this world of contradictions, the grievance took the form of a gratified wish.

Of all her relations, her cousin Sophy Maynard had long been her favourite. She was an intelligent unaffected young woman, a few years older than herself; the daughter of a London tradesman, excellently brought up, with a great deal of information and taste, and a total absence of airs and finery. In person, she might almost be called plain, but there was such a natural gentility about her; her manners were so pleasing, and her conversation so attractive, that few people after passing an evening in her society remem-

bered her want of beauty. She was exceedingly fond of the country, and of her pretty cousin, who, on her part, looked up to her with much of the respectful fondness of a young sister, and had thought to herself a hundred times, when most pleased with their new neighbour, "how I wish my cousin Sophy could see Edward Grey!" and now that her cousin Sophy had seen Edward Grey, poor Katy would have given all that she possessed in the world, if they had never met. They were heartily delighted with each other, and proclaimed openly their mutual good opinion. Sophy praised Mr. Grey's vivacity; Edward professed himself enchanted with Miss Maynard's voice. Each was astonished to find in the other, a cultivation unusual in that walk of life. They talked, and laughed, and sang together, and seemed so happy that Katy, without knowing why, became quite miserable, flew from Edward, avoided Sophy, shrank away from her kind father, and found no rest or comfort, except when she could creep alone to some solitary place, and give vent to her vexation in tears. Poor Katy! she could not tell what ailed her, but she was quite sure that she was wretched; and then she cried again.

In the meanwhile, the intimacy between the new friends became closer and closer. There was an air of intelligence between them that might have puzzled wiser heads than that of our simple miller-maiden. A secret—Could it be a love secret? And the influence of the gentleman was so open and avowed, that Sophy, when on the point of departure, consented to prolong her visit to Hatherford, at his request, although she had previously resisted Katy's solicitations, and the hospitable urgency of her father.

Affairs were in this posture, when one fine evening, towards the end of June, the cousins sallied forth for a walk, and were suddenly joined by Edward Grey, when at such a distance from the house, as to prevent the possibility of Katy's stealing back thither, as had been her usual habit on such occasions. The path they chose, led through long narrow meadows, sloping down, on either side, to the winding stream, enclosed by high hedges, and, seemingly, shut out from the world.

A pleasant walk it was, through those newly-mown meadows, just cleared of the hay, with the bright rivulet meandering through banks so variously beautiful; now fringed by rushes and sedges; now bordered by little thickets of hawthorn, and woodbine, and the briar-rose; now overhung by a pollard ash, or a silver-barked beech, or a lime-tree in full blossom. Now a smooth turfy slope, green to the eye, and soft to the foot; and now again a rich embroidery of the golden flag, the purple willow-herb, the blue forget-me-not, and "a thousand fresh-water flowers of several colours," making the banks as gay as a garden.

It was impossible not to pause in this lovely spot; and Sophy, who had been collecting a bright bunch of pink blossoms, the ragged-robin, the wild rose, the crane's-bill, and the fox-glove, or, to use the prettier Irish name of that superb plant, the fairy-cap, appealed to Katy to "read a lecture of her country art," and show "what every flower, as country people hold, did signify." A talent for which the young maid of the mill was as celebrated as Bellario. But poor Katy, who declined Edward's offered arm, had loitered a little behind, gathering a long wreath of the woodbine, and the briony, and the wild vetch, was, or pretended to be, deeply engaged in twisting the garland round her straw bonnet, and answered not a word. She tied on her bonnet, however, and stood by listening, whilst the other two continued to talk of the symbolic meaning of flowers, quoting the well-known lines from the Winter's Tale, and the almost equally charming passage from Philaster.

At length Edward, who, during the conversation, had been gathering all that he could collect of the tall almond-scented tufts of the elegant meadow-sweet, whose crested blossoms arrange themselves in a plumage so richly delicate, said, holding up his nosegay, "I do not know what mystical interpretation may be attached to this plant in Katy's 'country art,' but it is my favourite amongst flowers; and if I were inclined to follow the eastern manner of courtship, and make love by a nosegay, I should certainly send it to plead my cause. And it shall be so," he added, after a short pause, his bright and sudden smile illumining his whole countenance; "the botanical name signifies, the Queen of the Meadow, and wherever I offer this tribute, wherever I place this tuft, the homage of my heart, the proffer of my hand shall go also. Oh, that the offering might find favour with my queen!" Katy heard no more. She turned away to a little bay formed by the rivulet, where a bed of pebbles, overhung by a grassy bank, afforded a commodious seat, and there she sat her down, trembling, cold, and wretched; understanding for the first time her own feelings, and wondering if any body in all the world had ever been so unhappy before.

There she sat, with the tears rolling down her cheeks, unconsciously making "rings of rushes that grew thereby," and Edward's dog Ranger, who had been watching a shoal of minnows at play in the shallow water, and every now and then inserting his huge paw into the stream, as if trying to catch one, came to her, and laid his rough head, and his long curling brown ears into her lap, and looked at her with "eyes whose human meaning did not need the aid of speech"—eyes

full of pity and of love; for Ranger, in common with all the four-footed world, loved Katy dearly; and now he looked up in her face, and licked her cold hand. Oh! kinder and faithfuller than your master, thought poor Katy, as, with a fresh gush of tears, she laid her sweet face on the dog's head, and sat in that position, as it seemed to her, for ages, whilst her companions were hooking and landing some white water-lilies.

At last they approached, and she arose hastily and trembling, and walked on, anxious to escape observation. "Your garland is loose, Katy," said Edward, lifting his hand to her bonnet: "Come and see how nicely I have fastened it! No clearer mirror than the dark smooth basin of water, under those hazels! Come!" He put her hand under his arm, and led her thither; and there, when mechanically she cast her eyes on the stream, she saw the rich tuft of meadow-sweet, the identical Queen of the Meadow, waving like a plume, over her own straw bonnet: felt herself caught in Edward's arms; for between surprise and joy, she had well-nigh fallen; and when, with instinctive modesty, she escaped from his embrace, and took refuge with her cousin, the first sound that she heard was Sophy's affectionate whisper, "I knew it all the time, Katy! every body knew it but you! and the wedding must be next week, for I have promised Edward to stay and be bride's-maid;" and the very next week they were married.

DORA CRESWELL.

Few things are more delightful than to saunter along these green lanes of ours, in the busy harvest-time; the deep verdure of the hedge-rows, and the strong shadow of the trees, contrasting so vividly with the fields, partly waving with golden corn, partly studded with regular piles of heavy wheat-sheaves; the whole population abroad; the whole earth teeming with fruitfulness, and the bright autumn sun careering over-head, amidst the deep-blue sky, and the fleecy clouds of the most glowing, and least fickle of the seasons. Even a solitary walk loses its loneliness in the general cheerfulness of nature. The air is gay with bees and butterflies; the robin twitters from amongst the ripening hazel-nuts; and you cannot proceed a quarter of a mile, without encountering some merry group of leasers, or some long line of majestic wains, groaning under their rich burthen, brushing the close hedges on either side, and knocking their tall tops against the overhanging trees; the very image of ponderous plenty.

Pleasant, however, as such a procession is to look at, it is somewhat dangerous to meet, especially in a narrow lane; and I thought myself very fortunate one day last August, in being so near a five-barred gate, as to be enabled to escape from a cortége of labourers, and harvest-wagons, sufficiently bulky and noisy to convoy half the wheat in the parish. On they went, men, women, and children, shouting, laughing, and singing in joyous expectation of the coming harvest-home; the very wagons nodding from side to side, as if tipsy, and threatening every moment to break down bank, and tree, and hedge, and crush every obstacle that opposed them. It would have been as safe to encounter the car of Juggernaut; I blest my stars; and after leaning on the friendly gate until the last gleaner had passed, a ragged rogue of seven years old, who, with hair as white as flax, a skin as brown as a berry, and features as grotesque as an Indian idol, was brandishing his tuft of wheat-ears, and shrieking forth, in a shrill childish voice, and with a most ludicrous gravity, the popular song of "Buy a broom!"—after watching this young gentleman, (the urchin is of my acquaintance) as long as a curve in the lane would permit, I turned to examine in what spot chance had placed me, and found before my eyes another picture of rural life, but one as different from that which I had just witnessed, as the Arcadian peasants of Poussin, from the Boors of Teniers, or weeds from flowers, or poetry from prose.

I had taken refuge in a harvest-field belonging to my good neighbour, Farmer Creswell; a beautiful child lay on the ground at some little distance, whilst a young girl, resting from the labour of reaping, was twisting a rustic wreath of enamelled corn-flowers, brilliant poppies, snow-white lilybines, and light fragile harebells, mingled with tufts of the richest wheat-ears, around its hat.

There was something in the tender youthfulness of these two innocent creatures, in the pretty, though somewhat fantastic, occupation of the girl, the fresh wild-flowers, the ripe and swelling corn that harmonized with the season and the hour, and conjured up memories of "Dis and Proserpine," and of all that is gorgeous and graceful, in old mythology; of the lovely Lavinia of our own poet, and of that finest pastoral of the world, the far lovelier Ruth. But these fanciful associations soon vanished before the real sympathy excited by the actors of the scene, both of whom were known to me, and both objects of a sincere and lively interest.

The young girl, Dora Creswell, was the orphan niece of one of the wealthiest yeomen in our part of the word, the only child of his only brother; and having lost both her parents whilst still an infant, had been reared by her widowed uncle as fondly and carefully as his own son Walter. He said that he loved her quite as well, perhaps he loved her better; for

though it was impossible for a father not to be proud of the bold handsome youth, who, at eighteen, had a man's strength, and a man's stature; was the best ringer, the best cricketer, and the best shot in the county; yet the fairy Dora, who, nearly ten years younger, was at once his handmaid, his housekeeper, his plaything, and his companion, was evidently the apple of his eye. Our good farmer vaunted her accomplishments, as men of his class are wont to boast of a high-bred horse, or a favourite greyhound.

She could make a shirt and a pudding, darn stockings, rear poultry, keep accounts, and read the newspaper; was as famous for gooseberry wine as Mrs. Primrose, and could compound a syllabub with any dairy-woman in the county. There was not so handy a little creature any where; so thoughtful and trusty about the house, and yet out of doors as gay as a lark, and as wild as the wind; nobody was like his Dora. So said, and so thought Farmer Creswell: and before Dora was ten years old, he had resolved that in due time she should marry his son, Walter, and had informed both parties of his intention.

Now Farmer Creswell's intentions were well known to be as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. He was a fair specimen of an English yeoman, a tall, square-built, muscular, stout and active man, with a resolute countenance, a keen eye, and an intelligent smile; his temper was boisterous and irascible, generous and kind to those whom he loved, but quick to take offence, and slow to pardon, expecting and exacting implicit obedience from all about him. With all Dora's good gifts, the sweet and yielding nature of the gentle and submissive little girl, was undoubtedly the chief cause of her uncle's partiality. Above all, he was obstinate in the highest degree, had never been known to yield a point, or change a resolution; and the fault was the more inveterate, because he called it firmness, and accounted it a virtue. For the rest, he was a person of excellent principle, and perfect integrity; clear-headed, prudent, and sagacious; fond of agricultural experiments, which he pursued cautiously, and successfully; a good farmer, and a good man.

His son Walter, who was in person a handsome likeness of his father, resembled him also in many points of character, was equally obstinate, and far more fiery, hot, and bold. He loved his pretty cousin, much as he would have loved a favourite sister, and might very possibly, if let alone, have become attached to her as his father wished; but to be dictated to, to be chained down to a distant engagement, to hold himself bound to a mere child; the very idea was absurd; and restraining with difficulty an abrupt denial, he walked down into the village, predisposed, out of sheer contradiction, to fall in love with the first young woman who should come in his way; and he did fall in love accordingly.

Mary Hay, the object of his ill-fated passion, was the daughter of the respectable mistress of a small endowed school at the other end of the parish. She was a delicate, interesting creature, with a slight, drooping figure, and a fair, downcast face, like a snow-drop, forming such a contrast with her gay and gallant wooer, as Love, in his vagaries, is often pleased to bring together.

The courtship was secret and tedious, and prolonged from months to years; for Mary shrank from the painful contest which she knew that an avowal of their attachment would occasion. At length her mother died, and deprived of home, and maintenance, she reluctantly consented to a private marriage; an immediate discovery ensued, and was followed by all the evils, and more than all, that her worst fears had anticipated. Her husband was turned from the house of his father, and in less than three months, his death, by an inflammatory fever, left her a desolate and penniless widow — unowned and unassisted by the stern parent, on whose unrelenting temper neither the death of his son, nor the birth of his grandson, seemed to make the slightest impression. But for the general sympathy excited by the deplorable situation, and blameless demeanour of the widowed bride, she and her infant might have taken refuge in the workhouse. The whole neighbourhood was zealous to relieve, and to serve them; but their most liberal benefactress, their most devoted friend, was poor Dora. Considering her uncle's partiality to herself as the primary cause of all this misery, she felt like a guilty creature; and casting off at once her native timidity, and habitual submission, she had repeatedly braved his anger, by the most earnest supplications for mercy and for pardon; and when this proved unavailing, she tried to mitigate their distresses by all the assistance that her small means would permit. Every shilling of her pocket-money, she expended upon her poor cousins; worked for them, begged for them, and transferred to them every present that was made to herself, from a silk frock, to a penny tartlet. Every thing that was her own she gave, but nothing of her uncle's; for, though sorely tempted to transfer some of the plenty around her, to those whose claims seemed so just, and whose need was so urgent, Dora felt that she was trusted, and that she must prove herself trust-worthy.

Such was the posture of affairs, at the time of my encounter with Dora, and little Walter, in the harvest-field; the rest will be best told in the course of our dialogue.

"And so, Madam! I cannot bear to see my dear cousin Mary so sick, and so melancholy; and the dear, dear child, that a king might be proud of—only look at him!" exclaimed Dora, interrupting herself, as the beautiful child,

sitting on the ground, in all the placid dignity of infancy, looked up at me and smiled in my face; "only look at him," continued she, "and think of that dear boy, and his dear mother living on charity, and they my uncle's lawful heirs, whilst I, who have no right whatever, no claim at all,—I, that compared to them, am but a far-off kinswoman, the mere creature of his bounty, should revel in comfort, and in plenty, and they starving! I cannot bear it, and I will not. And then the wrong that he is doing himself, he that is really so good and kind, to be called a hard-hearted tyrant, by the whole country side. And he is unhappy himself too; I know that he is; so tired as he comes home, he will walk about his room half the night; and often at meal times, he will drop his knife and fork, and sigh so heavily. He may turn me out of doors, as he threatened; or, what is worse, call me ungrateful, or undutiful, but he shall see this boy."

"He never has seen him then? and that is the reason you are tricking him out so prettily."—

"Yes, ma'am. Mind what I told you, Walter! and hold up your hat, and say what I bid you."

"Gan-papa's fowers!" stammered the pretty boy, in his sweet childish voice, the first words that I had ever heard him speak.

"Grand-papa's flowers!" said his zealous preceptress.

"Gan-papa's fowers!" echoed the boy.

"Shall you take the child to the house, Dora!" asked I.

"No, ma'am, for I look for my uncle here every minute, and this is the best place to ask a favour in, for the very sight of the great crop puts him in good-humour; not so much on account of the profits, but because the land never bore half so much before, and it's all owing to his management in dressing and drilling. I came reaping here to-day, on purpose to please him; for though he says he does not wish me to work in the fields, I know he likes it; and here he shall see little Walter. Do you think he can resist him, ma'am," continued Dora, leaning over her infant cousin, with the grace and fondness of a young Madonna; "do you think he can resist him, poor child! so helpless, so harmless; his own blood too, and so like his father, no heart could be hard enough to hold out, and I am sure that his will not. Only," pursued Dora, relapsing into her girlish tone and attitude, as a cold fear crossed her enthusiastic hope,—"only, I am half-afraid, that Walter will cry. It's strange, when one wants any thing to behave particularly well, how sure it is to be naughty; my pets especially. I remember when my Lady Countess came on purpose to see our white peacock, that we got in a present from India, the obstinate bird ran away behind a bean-stack, and would not spread his train, to show the dead-white spots on his glossy white feathers, all we could do. Her ladyship was quite angry. And my red and yellow marvel of Peru, which used to blow at four in the afternoon, as regular as the clock struck, was not open the other day at five, when dear Miss Ellen came to paint it, though the sun was shining as bright as it does now. If Walter should scream and cry, for my uncle does sometimes look so stern; and then it's Saturday, and he has such a beard! if the child should be frightened!—Be sure, Walter, you don't cry!" said Dora, in great alarm.

"Gan-papa's fowers," replied the smiling boy, holding up his hat; and his young protectress was comforted.

At that moment the farmer was heard whistling to his dog in a neighbouring field, and fearful that my presence might injure the cause, I departed, my thoughts full of the noble little girl, and her generous purpose.

I had promised to call the next afternoon, to learn her success; and passing the harvest-field in my way, I found a group assembled there, which instantly dissipated my anxiety. On the very spot where we had parted, I saw the good farmer himself, in his Sunday clothes, tossing little Walter in the air; the child laughing and screaming, with delight, and his grandfather, apparently quite as much delighted as himself. A pale, slender, young woman, in deep mourning, stood looking at their gambols with an air of intense thankfulness; and Dora, the cause and sharer of all this happiness, was loitering behind, playing with the flowers in Walter's hat, which she was holding in her hand. Catching my eye, the sweet girl came to me instantly.

"I see how it is, my dear Dora! and I give you joy from the bottom of my heart. Little Walter behaved well then?"

"Oh, he behaved like an angel."

"Did he say, gan-papa's fowers?"

"Nobody spoke a word. The moment the child took off his hat, and looked up, the truth seemed to flash on my uncle, and to melt his heart at once—the boy is so like his father. He knew him, instantly, and caught him up in his arms, and hugged him just as he is hugging him now."

"And the beard, Dora?"

"Why, that seemed to take the child's fancy, he put up his little hands and stroked it; and laughed in his grandfather's face, and flung his chubby arms round his neck, and held out his sweet mouth to be kissed; and how my uncle did kiss him! I thought he never would have done; and then he sate down on a wheat-sheaf and cried; and I cried too! Very strange that one should cry for happiness!" added Dora, as some large drops fell on the wreath which she was adjusting round Walter's hat; "Very strange," repeated she, looking up, with a bright smile, and brushing away the tears from her rosy cheeks,

with a bunch of corn-flowers; "Very strange that I should cry, when I am the happiest creature alive; for Mary and Walter are to live with us; and my dear uncle, instead of being angry with me, says that he loves me better than ever. How very strange it is," said Dora, as the tears poured down, faster and faster, "that I should be so foolish as to cry!"

THE BIRD-CATCHER.

A London fog is a sad thing, as every inhabitant of London knows full well: dingy, dusky, dirty, damp; an atmosphere black as smoke, and wet as steam, that wraps round you like a blanket; a cloud reaching from earth to heaven; a "palpable obscure," which not only turns day into night, but threatens to extinguish the lamps and lanthorns, with which the poor street-wanderers strive to illumine their darkness, dimming and paling the "ineffectual fires," until the volume of gas at a shop-door cuts no better figure than a hedge glow-worm, and a duchess's flambeau would veil its glories to a Will-o'-the-wisp. A London fog is, not to speak profanely, a sort of renewal and reversal of Joshua's miracle; the sun seems to stand still as on that occasion, only that now it stands in the wrong place, and gives light to the Antipodes. The very noises of the street come stifled and smothered through that suffocating medium; din is at a pause; the town is silenced; and the whole population, biped and quadruped, sympathise with the dead and chilling weight of the out-of-door world. Dogs and cats just look up from their slumbers, turn round, and go to sleep again; the little birds open their pretty eyes, stare about them, wonder that the night is so long, and settle themselves afresh on their perches. Silks lose their gloss, cravats their stiffness, hackney-coachmen their way; young ladies fall out of curl, and mammas out of temper; masters scold; servants grumble; and the whole city, from Hyde Park Corner to Wapping, looks sleepy and cross, like a fine gentleman roused before his time, and forced to get up by candle-light. Of all detestable things, a London fog is the most detestable.

Now a country fog is quite another matter. To say nothing of its rarity, and in this dry and healthy midland county, few of the many variations of our variable English climate are rarer; to say nothing of its unfrequent recurrence, there is about it much of the peculiar and characteristic beauty which almost all natural phenomena exhibit to those who have themselves that faculty, oftener perhaps claimed than possessed, a genuine feeling of nature. This last lovely autumn, when the flowers of all seasons seemed mingling as one sometimes sees them in a painter's garland—the violets and primroses re-blossoming, and new crops of sweet-peas and mignionette blending with the chrysanthemum, the Michaelmas daisy, and the dahlia, the latest blossoms of the year—when the very leaves clung to the trees with a freshness so vigorous and so youthful, that they seemed to have determined, in spite of their old bad habit, that for once they would not fall—this last lovely autumn has given us more foggy mornings, or rather more foggy days, than I ever remember to have seen in Berkshire: days beginning in a soft and vapoury mistiness, enveloping the whole country in a veil, snowy, fleecy, and light, as the smoke which one often sees circling in the distance from some cottage chimney, or as the still whiter clouds which float around the moon: and finishing in sunsets of a surprising richness and beauty, when the mist is lifted up from the earth, and turned into a canopy of unrivalled gorgeousness, purple, rosy, and golden, and disclosing the splendid autumn landscape, with its shining rivulets, its varied and mellow woodland tints, and its deep emerald pasture lands, every blade and leaf covered with a thousand little drops, as pure as crystal, glittering and sparkling in the sunbeams like the dew on a summer morning, or the still more brilliant scintillations of frost.

It was in one of these days, early in November, that we set out about noon to pay a visit to a friend at some distance. The fog was yet on the earth, only some brightening in the south-west gave token that it was likely to clear away. As yet, however, the mist held complete possession—a much prettier, lighter, and cleaner vapour than that which is defiled with London smoke, but every whit as powerful and as delusive. We could not see the shoemaker's shop across the road—no! nor our chaise when it drew up before our door; were fain to guess at our own laburnum tree; and found the sign of the Rose invisible, even when we ran against the sign-post. Our little maid, a kind and careful lass, who, perceiving the dreariness of the weather, followed us across the court with extra wraps, had well-nigh tied my veil round her master's hat, and enveloped me in his bearskin; and my dog Mayflower, a white greyhound of the largest size, who had a mind to give us the undesired honour of her company, carried her point in spite of the united efforts of half-a-dozen active pursuers, simply because the fog was so thick that nobody could see her. It was a complete game at bo-peep. Even mine host of the Rose, one of the most alert of her followers, remained invisible, although we heard his voice close beside us.

A misty world it was, and a watery; and I, that had been praising the beauty of the fleecy white fog every day for a week before, began

to sigh, and shiver, and quake, as much from dread of an overturn as from damp and chilliness, whilst my careful driver and his sagacious steed went on groping their way through the woody lanes that lead to the Loddon. Nothing but the fear of confessing my fear, that feeling which makes so many cowards brave, prevented me from begging to turn back again. On, however, we went, the fog becoming every moment heavier as we approached that beautiful and brimming river, which always, even in the midst of summer, brings with it such images of coolness and freshness as haunt the fancy after reading Undine; and where on the present occasion we seemed literally to breathe water—as Dr. Clarke said in passing the Danube. My companion, nevertheless, continued to assure me that the day would clear—nay, that it was already clearing: and I soon found that he was right. As we left the river, we seemed to leave the fog; and before we had reached the pretty village of Barkham, the mist had almost disappeared; and I began to lose at once my silent fears and my shivering chilliness, and to resume my cheerfulness and my admiration.

It was curious to observe how object after object glanced out of the vapour. First of all, the huge oak, at the corner of Farmer Locke's field, which juts out into the lane like a crag into the sea, forcing the road to wind around it, stood like a hoary giant, with its head lost in the clouds; then Farmer Hewitt's great barn—the house, ricks, and stables still invisible; then a gate, and half a cow, her head being projected over it in strong relief, whilst the hinder part of her body remained in the haze; then more and more distinctly, hedgerows, cottages, trees and fields, until, as we reached the top of Barkham Hill, the glorious sun broke forth, and the lovely picture lay before our eyes in its soft and calm beauty, emerging gradually from the vapour that overhung it, in such a manner as the image of his sleeping Geraldine is said to have been revealed to Surrey in the magic glass. A beautiful picture it forms at all times, that valley of Barkham. Fancy a road winding down a hill between high banks, richly studded with huge forest trees, oak and beech, to a sparkling stream, with a foot-bridge thrown across, which runs gurgling along the bottom; then turning abruptly, and ascending the opposite hill, whilst the rich plantations and old paling of a great park "come cranking in" on one side, and two or three irregular cottages go straggling up on the other; the whole bathed in the dewy sunshine, and glowing with the vivid colouring of autumn. The picture had, at the moment of which I speak, an additional interest, by presenting to our eyes the first human being whom we had seen during our drive (we had heard several); one, too, who, although he bore little resemblance to the fair mistress of Lord Surrey, was yet sufficiently picturesque, and in excellent keeping with the surrounding scene.

It was a robust, sturdy, old man, his long grey hair appearing between his well-worn hat and his warm but weather-beaten coat, with a large package at his back, covered with oilskin, a bundle of short regular poles in one hand, and a large bunch of thistles in the other; and even before Mayflower, who now made her appearance, and was endeavouring to satisfy her curiosity by pawing and poking the knapsack, thereby awakening the noisy fears of two call-birds, who, together with a large bird-net, formed its contents,—before this audible testimony of his vocation, or the still stronger assurance of his hearty good-humoured visage, my companion, himself somewhat of an amateur in the art, had recognised his friend and acquaintance Old Robin, the bird-catcher of B.

We soon overtook the old man, and after apologizing for Mayflower's misdemeanour, who, by the way, seemed sufficiently disposed to renew the assault, we proceeded at the same slow pace up the hill, holding disjointed chat on the badness of the weather these foggy mornings, and the little chance there was of doing much good with the nets so late in the afternoon. To which Robin gave a doleful assent. He was, however, going, he said, to try for a few linnets on the common beyond the Great House, and was in hopes to get a couple of woodlarks from the plantations. He wanted the woodlarks, above all things, for Mrs. Bennett, the alderman's lady of B., whose husband had left the old shop in the Market-place, and built a fine white cottage just beyond the turnpike-gate—so madam had set her heart on a couple of woodlarks, to hang up in her new shrubbery and make the place look rural.

"Hang up, Robin! Why there is not a tree a foot high in the whole plantation! Woodlarks! Why they 'll be dead before Christmas."

"That 's sure enough, your honour," rejoined Robin.

"A soft-billed bird, that requires as much care as a nightingale!" continued my companion. "By the way, Robin, have you any nightingales now?"

"Two, sir; a hen——"

"A hen! That 's something remarkable!"

"A great curiosity, sir; for your honour knows that we always set the trap for nightingales by ear like; the creature is so shy that one can seldom see it, so one is forced to put the mealworm near where one hears the song; and it 's the most uncommon thing that can be to catch a hen; but I have one, and a fine cock too, that I caught last spring just afore building time. Two as healthy birds as ever were seen."

"Is the cock in song still?"

"Ay, sir, in full song; piping away, jug, jug, jug, all the day, and half the night. I wish your honour would come and hear it." And, with a promise to that effect, we parted, each our several ways; we to visit our friend, he to catch, if catch he could, a couple of woodlarks to make Mrs. Bennett's villa look rural.

Old Robin had not always been a bird-catcher. He had, what is called, fallen in the world. His father had been the best-accustomed and most fashionable shoemaker in the town of B., and Robin succeeded, in right of eldership, to his house, his business, his customers, and his debts. No one was ever less fitted for the craft. Birds had been his passion from the time that he could find a nest or string an egg: and the amusement of the boy became the pursuit of the man. No sooner was he his own master than his whole house became an aviary, and his whole time was devoted to breeding, taming, and teaching the feathered race; an employment that did not greatly serve to promote his success as a cordwainer. He married; and an extravagant wife, and a neglected, and, therefore, unprosperous business, drove him more and more into the society of the pretty creatures, whose company he had always so greatly preferred to that of the two-legged unfeathered animal, called man. Things grew worse and worse; and at length poor Robin appeared in the Gazette—ruined, as his wife and his customers said, by birds: or, as he himself said, by his customers and his wife. Perhaps there was some truth on either side; at least, a thousand pounds of bad debts on his books, and a whole pile of milliners and mantuamakers' bills, went nigh to prove the correctness of his assertion. Ruined, however, he was; and a happy day it was for him, since, his stock being sold, his customers gone, and his prospects in trade fairly at an end, his wife (they had no family) deserted him also, and Robin, thus left a free man, determined to follow the bent of his genius, and devote the remainder of his life to the breeding, catching, and selling of birds.

For this purpose he hired an apartment in the ruinous quarter of B. called the Soak, a high, spacious attic, not unlike a barn, which came recommended to him by its cheapness, its airiness, and its extensive cage-room; and his creditors having liberally presented him with all the inhabitants of his aviary, some of which were very rare and curious, as well as a large assortment of cages, nets, traps, and seeds, he began his new business with great spirit, and has continued it ever since with various success, but with unabating perseverance, zeal, and good-humour—a very poor and a very happy man. His garret in the Soak is one of the boasts of B.; all strangers go to see the birds and the bird-catcher, and most of his visiters are induced to become purchasers, for there is no talking with Robin on his favourite subject without catching a little of his contagious enthusiasm. His room is quite a menagerie, something like what the feathered department of the ark must have been—as crowded, as numerous, and as noisy.

The din is really astounding. To say nothing of the twitter of whole legions of linnets, goldfinches, and canaries, the latter of all ages; the clattering and piping of magpies, parrots, jackdaws, and bullfinches, in every stage of their education; the deeper tones of blackbirds, thrushes, larks, and nightingales, never fail to swell the chorus, aided by the cooing of doves, the screeching of owls, the squeakings of guinea-pigs, and the eternal grinding of a barrel-organ, which a little damsel of eight years old, who officiates under Robin as feeder and cleaner, turns round, with melancholy monotony, to the loyal and patriotic tunes of *Rule Britannia* and *God save the King*, the only airs, as her master observes, which are sure not to go out of fashion.

Except this young damsel and her music, the apartment exhibits but few signs of human habitation. A macaw is perched on the little table, and a cockatoo chained to the only chair; the roof is tenanted by a choice breed of tumbler pigeons, and the floor cumbered by a brood of curious bantams, unrivalled for ugliness.

Here Robin dwells, in the midst of the feathered population, except when he sallies forth at morning or evening to spread his nets for goldfinches or bullfinches on the neighbouring commons, or to place his trap-cages for the larger birds. Once or twice a year, indeed, he wanders into Oxfordshire, to meet the great flocks of linnets, six or seven hundred together, which congregate on those hills, and may be taken by dozens; and he has had ambitious thoughts of trying the great market of Covent-garden for the sale of his live stock. But in general he remains quietly at home. That nest in the Soak is too precious a deposit to leave long; and he is seldom without some especial favourite to tend and fondle. At present, the hen-nightingale seems his pet; the last was a white blackbird; and once he had a whole brood of gorgeous kingfishers, seven glorious creatures, for whose behoof he took up a new trade and turned fisherman, dabbling all day with a hand-net in the waters of the Soak. It was the prettiest sight in the world to see them snatch the minnows from his hand, with a shy mistrustful tameness, glancing their bright heads from side to side, and then darting off like bits of the rainbow. I had an entire sympathy with Robin's delight in his kingfishers. He sold them to his chief patron, Mr. Jay, a little fidgety old bachelor, with a sharp face, a hooked nose, a brown complexion, and a full suit of snuff-colour, not much unlike a bird himself; and that worthy gentleman's mismanagement and a frosty winter killed the kingfishers every one. It was quite affecting to hear poor Robin talk

of their death. But Robin has store of tender anecdotes; and any one who has a mind to cry over the sorrows of a widowed turtle-dove, and to hear described to the life her vermilion-eye, black gorget, soft plumage, and plaintive note, cannot do better than pay a visit to the garret in the Soak, and listen for half an hour to my friend the bird-catcher.

MY GODMOTHERS.

Of one of my godmothers I recollect but little. She lived at a distance, and seldom came in my way. The little, however, that I do remember of her, is very pleasing. She was the wife of a dignified clergyman, and resided chiefly in a great cathedral town, to which I once or twice accompanied my father, whose near relation she had married. She was a middle-aged woman, with sons and daughters already settled in life, and must in her youth have been exceedingly lovely; indeed, in spite of an increase of size which had greatly injured her figure, she might still be deemed a model of matronly beauty. Her face was in the highest degree soft, feminine, and delicate, with an extreme purity and fairness of complexion; dove-like eyes, a gentle smile, and a general complacency and benevolence of aspect, such as I have rarely seen equalled. That sweet face was all sunshine. There was something in her look which realized the fine expression of the poet, when he speaks of—

> ——"those eyes affectionate and glad,
> That seem'd to love whate'er they looked upon."

Her voice and manner were equally delightful, equally captivating, although quite removed from any of the usual arts of captivation. Their great charm was their perfect artlessness and graciousness, the natural result of a most artless and gracious nature. She kept little company, being so deaf as almost to unfit her for society. But this infirmity, which to most people is so great a disadvantage, seemed in her case only an added charm. She sat on her sofa in sober cheerfulness, placid and smiling, as if removed from the cares and the din of the work-a-day world; or, if any thing particularly interesting was going forward in the apartment, she would look up with such a pretty air of appeal, such silent questioning, as made every body eager to translate for her,—some by loud distinct speech, some by writing, and some by that delicate and mysterious sign-manual, that unwritten shorthand, called talking on the fingers, whatever happened to be passing; and she was so attentive and so quick, that one sentence, half a sentence, a word, half a word, would often be enough. She could catch even the zest of a repartee, that most evanescent and least transfusible of all things; and when she uttered her pretty petition, "Mirth, admit me of thy crew!" brought as ready a comprehension, as true a spirit of gaiety, and as much innocent enjoyment into a young and laughing circle, as she found there. Her reliance on the kindness and affection of all around her was unbounded; she judged of others by herself, and was quite free from mistrust and jealousy, the commonest and least endurable infirmity of the deaf. She went out little, but at home her hospitality and benevolence won all hearts. She was a most sweet person. I saw too little of her, and lost her too soon; but I loved her dearly, and still cherish her memory.

Her husband was a very kind and genial person also, although in a different way. The Dean, for such was his professional rank, was a great scholar, an eminent Grecian, a laborious editor, a profound and judicious critic, an acute and sagacious commentator—who passed days and nights in his library, covered with learned dust, and deep in the metres. Out of his study he was, as your celebrated scholar is apt to be, exceedingly like a boy just let loose from school, wild with animal spirits, and ripe for a frolic. He was also (another not uncommon characteristic of an eminent Grecian) the most simple-hearted and easy-tempered creature that lived, and a most capital playfellow. I thought no more of stealing the wig from his head than a sparrow does of robbing a cherry-tree; and he, merriest and most undignified of dignitaries, enjoyed the fun as much as I did, would toss the magnificent caxon (a full-bottomed periwig of most capacious dimensions,) as high in the air as its own gravity would permit it to ascend, to the unspeakable waste of powder, and then would snatch me up in his arms, (a puny child of eight years old, who was as a doll in his sinewy hands,) and threaten to fling me after his flying peruke. He would have done just the same if he had been Archbishop of Canterbury—and so should I—the arch-episcopal wig would have shared the same fate; so completely did the joyous temperament of the man break down the artificial restraints of his situation. He was a most loveable person was Mr. Dean; but the charm and glory of the Deanery, was my dear godmamma.

My other godmother was a very different sort of person, and will take many more words to describe.

Mrs. Patience Wither (for so was she called) was the survivor of three maiden sisters, who, on the death of their father, a rich and well-descended country gentleman, had agreed to live together, and their united portions having centred in her, she was in possession of a handsome fortune. In point of fact, she was not my godmother, having only stood as proxy for her younger sister, Mrs. Mary, my mother's

intimate friend, then falling into the lingering decline, of which she afterwards died. Mrs. Mary must have been, to judge of her from universal report, and from a portrait which still remains, a most interesting woman, drooping, pale, and mild; and beautiful also, very beautiful, from elegance and expression. She was undoubtedly my real godmamma; but on her death, Mrs. Patience, partly from regard for her sister, partly out of compliment to my family, and partly, perhaps, to solace herself by the exercise of an office of some slight importance and authority, was pleased to lay claim to me in right of inheritance, and succeeded to the title of my godmother pretty much in the same way that she succeeded to the possession of Flora, her poor sister's favourite spaniel. I am afraid that Flora proved the more grateful subject of the two.

Mrs. Patience was of the sort of women that young people particularly dislike, and characterize by the ominous epithet, *cross*. She was worse than cross; stern, stiff, domineering, and authoritative, her person was very masculine, tall, square, and large-boned, and remarkably upright. Her features were sufficiently regular, and would not have been unpleasing, but for the keen angry look of her light-blue eye, (your blue eye, which has such a name for softness amongst those great mistakers, lovers and poets, is often wild, and almost fierce in its expression) and her fiery wiry red hair, to which age did no good,—it would not turn grey. In short she was, being always expensively drest, and a good deal in the rear of fashion, not unlike my childish notion of that famous but disagreeable personage, Queen Elizabeth; which comparison being repeated to Mrs. Patience, who luckily took it for a compliment, added considerably to the interest she was so good as to take in my health, welfare, and improvement.

I never saw her but she took possession of me for the purpose of lecturing and documenting on some subject or other,—holding up my head, shutting the door, working a sampler, making a shirt, learning the pence-table, or taking physic. She used to hear me read French out of a well-thumbed copy of Telemaque, and to puzzle me with questions from the English chronology—which may perhaps be the reason, that I, at this day, to my great shame be it spoken, dislike that famous prose epic, and do not know in what century Queen Anne came to the throne.

In addition to these iniquities, she was assiduous in presents to me at home and at school; sent me cakes with cautions against over-eating, and needle-cases with admonitions to use them; she made over to me her own juvenile library, consisting of a large collection of unreadable books, which I, in my turn, have given away; nay, she even rummaged out for me a pair of old battledores, curiously constructed of netted pack-thread—the toys of her youth! But bribery is generally thrown away upon children, especially on spoilt ones; the godmother whom I loved never gave me any thing; and every fresh present from Mrs. Patience seemed to me a fresh grievance. I was obliged to make a call and a curtsy, and to stammer out something which passed for a speech; or, which was still worse, to write a letter of thanks—a stiff, formal, precise letter! I would rather have gone without cakes or needle-cases, books or battledores, to my dying day. Such was my ingratitude from five to fifteen.

As time wore on, however, I amended. I began to see the value of constant interest and attention—even although the forms they assumed might not be the most pleasant—to be thankful for her kindness and attentive to her advice; and by the time I arrived at years of discretion, had got to like her very much, especially in her absence, and to endure her presence (when it was quite impossible to run away) with sufficient fortitude. It is only since she has been fairly dead and buried, that I have learnt to estimate her properly. Now, I recollect how very worthy of esteem and respect she really was, how pious, how hospitable, how charitable, how generous! Nothing but the comfort of knowing that she never found it out, could lull my remorse for having disliked her so much in her life-time; the more especially, as upon recollection, I don't think she was so absolutely unbearable. She was only a little prejudiced, as one who had lived constantly in one limited sphere; rather ignorant and narrow-minded, a full century behind the spirit of the age, as one who had read dull books and kept dull company; fearfully irritable, fretful, and cross, as one who has had all her life the great misfortune (seldom enough pitied or considered) of having her own way; and superlatively stiff, and starched, and prim, in her quality of old maid. There is a great improvement now-a-days in the matter of single ladies; they may be, and many of them actually are, pleasant with impunity to man or woman, and are so like the rest of the world in way and word, that a stranger is forced to examine the third finger of the left hand, to ascertain whether or no they be married; but Mrs. Patience was an old maid of the old school—there was no mistaking her condition—you might as well question that of the frost-bitten gentlewoman pacing to church through the snow in Hogarth's inimitable and unforgetable "Morning." With these drawbacks she was, as I have said before, an estimable person; stanch in her friendships, liberal in her house-keeping, much addicted to all sorts of subscriptions, and a most active lecturer and benefactress of the poor, whom she scolded and relieved with indefatigable good-will.

She lived in a large, tall, upright, stately house, in the largest street of a large town.

It was a grave-looking mansion, defended from the pavement by iron palisades, a flight of steps before the sober brown door, and every window curtained and blinded by chintz and silk and muslin, crossing and jostling each other; none of the rooms could be seen from the street, nor the street from any of the rooms—so complete was the obscurity. She seemed to consider this window-veiling as a point of propriety; notwithstanding which, she contrived to know so well all the goings-on of all her neighbours, and who went up or who went down Chapel Street, that I could not help suspecting she had in some one of her many muffling draperies a sort of peep-hole, such as you sometimes see a face staring through in the green curtain at the play-house. I am sure she must have had a contrivance of the kind, though I cannot absolutely say that I ever made out the actual slit; but then I was cautious in my pryings, and afraid of being caught. I am sure that a peep-hole there was.

She lived in a good position for an observatory too, her house being situate in a great thoroughfare, one end abutting on a popular chapel, the other on a celebrated dancing-academy, so that every day in the week brought affluence of carriages to the one side or to the other;—an influx of amusement of which she did not fail to make the most, enjoying it first, and complaining of it afterwards, after the fashion of those unfortunate persons who have a love of grumbling, and very little to grumble at. I don't know what she would have done without the resource afforded by her noisy neighbours, especially those on the saltatory side, whose fiddles, door-knockings, and floor-shakings, were the subject of perpetual objurgation; for the usual complaining ground of the prosperous, health and nerves, was completely shut against her. She never was ill in her life, and was too much in the habit of abusing nerves in other people, to venture to make use of them on her own account. It was a most comfortable grievance, and completed the many conveniences of her commodious mansion.

Her establishment was handsome and regular, and would have gone on like clock-work, if she had not thought a due portion of managing, that is to say, of vituperation, absolutely necessary for the well-being of herself and servants. It *did* go on like clock-work, for the well-seasoned domestics no more minded those diurnal scolding fits, than they did the great Japan time-piece in the hall when it struck the hour; a ring of the bell, or a knock at the door, were events much more startling to this staid and sober household, who, chosen, the men for their age, and the women for their ugliness, always seemed to have a peculiar hatred to quick motion. They would not even run to get out of the way of their mistress, although pretty sure of a lecture, right or wrong, whenever she encountered them. But then, as the fishmonger said of the eels that he was skinning, —"They were used to it."

The only things in the house which she did not scold were two favourite dogs—Flora, a fat, lazy, old spaniel, soft and round as a cushion, and almost as inert; and Daphne, a particularly ugly, noisy pug, that barked at every body that came into the house, and bit at most. Daphne was the pet *par excellence*. She *overcrowed* even her mistress, as old Spenser hath it, and Mrs. Patience respected her accordingly. Really, comparing the size of the animal with the astonishing loudness and continuance of her din, she performed prodigies of barking. Her society was a great resource to me, when I was taken to pay my respects to my godmamma. She (I mean Daphne) had, after her surly and snip-snap manner, a kindness for me; condescended to let me pat her head without much growling, and would even take a piece of cake out of my hand without biting my fingers. We were great friends. Daphne's company and conversation lightened the time amazingly. She was certainly the most entertaining person, the most *alive* of any one I met there.

Mrs. Patience's coterie was, to say the truth, rather select than numerous, rather respectable than amusing. It consisted of about half a dozen elderly ladies of unexceptionable quality, and one unfortunate gentleman, who met to play a rubber at each other's houses, about six evenings in the week, all the year round, and called on one another nearly every morning. The chief member of this chosen society was, next to Mrs. Patience, who would everywhere be first, Lady Jane, a widow, and Miss Pym, her maiden sister, who resided with her. Lady Jane was a round, quiet, sleepy woman, not unlike—with reverence be it spoken—to the fat spaniel Flora; you never knew when she was present or when she was not; Miss Pym, sharper and brisker, thinner and shorter, bore more resemblance to my friend Daphne, the vixenish pug—you were pretty sure to hear *her*.—There was also a grave and sedate Mrs. Long, a slow, safe, circumspect person, who talked of the weather; a Mrs. Harden, speechifying and civil, and a Miss Harden, her daughter, civiller still. These were the ladies. The beau of the party, Mr. Knight, had been originally admitted in right of a deceased wife, and was retained on his own merits. In my life I never beheld a man so hideously ugly, tall, shambling, and disjointed, with features rough, huge, and wooden, grey hair, stiff and bristly, long shaggy eyebrows, a skin like a hide, and a voice and address quite in keeping with this amiable exterior, as uncouth as Caliban.

For these gifts and accomplishments he was undoubtedly preferred to the honour of being the only gentleman tolerated in this worship-

ful society, from which Dr. Black, the smart young physician, and Mr. White, the keen, sharp, clever lawyer, and Mr. Brown, the spruce curate of the parish, and even Mr. Green, the portly vicar, were excluded. I did not so much wonder at their admiring Mr. Knight for his ugliness, which was so grotesque and remarkable, as to be really prepossessing—it was worth one's while to see any thing so complete in its way; but I did a little marvel at his constancy to this bevy of belles, for, strange and uncouth as the man was, there was an occasional touch of slyness and humour about him, and a perpetual flow of rough kindness, which, joined with his large property, would easily have gained him the entré into more amusing circles. Perhaps he liked to be the sole object of attention to six ladies, albeit somewhat past their prime; perhaps he found amusement in quizzing them—he was wicked enough sometimes to warrant the supposition; perhaps—for mixed motives are commonly the truest in that strangely compounded biped man—a little of both might influence him; or perhaps a third, and still more powerful inducement, might lurk behind as yet unsuspected.—Certain it is, that every evening he was found in that fair circle, cordially welcomed by all its members except my godmamma. She, to be sure, minced and primmed, and tossed her head, and thought they should have been better without him; and although she admitted him to the privilege of visiting at her house, to the coffee, the green tea, the chit-chat, the rubber, the cake and the liqueur, she carefully refrained from honouring with her presence, the annual party at his country farm, where all the other ladies resorted to drink syllabub, and eat strawberries and cream; pertinaciously refused to let him drive her out airing in his handsome open carriage, and even went so far as to order her footman not to let him in when she was alone.

Besides her aversion to mankind in general, an aversion as fierce and active as it was groundless, she had unluckily, from having been assailed by two or three offers, obviously mercenary, imbibed a most unfounded suspicion of the whole sex; and now seldom looked at a man without fancying that she detected in him an incipient lover; sharing, in this respect, though from a reverse motive, the common delusion of the pretty and the young. She certainly suspected Mr. Knight of matrimonial intentions towards her fair self, and as certainly suspected him wrongfully. Mr. Knight had no such design; and contrived most effectually to prove his innocence, one fair morning, by espousing Miss Harden, on whom, as she sat dutifully netting by the side of her mamma, at one corner of the card-table, I had myself observed him to cast very frequent and significant glances. Miss Harden was a genteel woman of six-and-thirty, rather faded, but still pleasing, and sufficiently dependent on her mother's life-income, to find in Mr. Knight's large fortune, to say nothing of his excellent qualities, an adequate compensation for his want of beauty. It was altogether a most suitable match, and so pronounced by the world at large, with the solitary exception of Mrs. Patience, who, though thus effectually secured from the attentions of her imputed admirer, by no means relished the means by which this desirable end had been accomplished. She sneered at the bride, abused the bridegroom, found fault with the bride-cake, and finally withdrew herself entirely from her former associates, a secession by which, it may be presumed, her own comfort was more affected than theirs.

She now began to complain of solitude, and to talk of taking a niece to reside with her, a commodity of which there was no lack in the family. Her elder brother had several daughters, and desired nothing better than to see one of them adopted by Mrs. Patience. Three of these young ladies came successively on trial—pretty lively girls, so alike, that I scarcely remember them apart, can hardly assign to them a separate individuality, except that, perhaps, Miss Jane might be the tallest, and Miss Gertrude might sing the best. In one particular, the resemblance was most striking, their sincere wish to get turned out of favour and sent home again. No wonder! A dismal life it must have seemed to them, used to the liberty and gaiety of a large country house, full of brothers, and sisters, and friends, a quiet indulgent mother, a hearty hospitable father, riding, and singing, and parties and balls; a doleful contrast it must have seemed to them, poor things, to sit all day in that nicely furnished parlour, where the very chairs seemed to know their places, reading aloud some grave, dull book, or working their fingers to the bone, (Mrs. Patience could not bear to see young people idle,) walking just one mile out and one mile in, on the London road; dining tête-a-tête in all the state of two courses and removes; playing all the evening at backgammon, most unlucky if they won, and going to bed just as the clock struck ten! No wonder that they exerted all their ingenuity to make themselves disagreeable; and as that is an attempt in which people who set about it with a thorough good-will, are pretty certain to succeed, they were discarded, according to their wishes, with all convenient dispatch.

Miss Jemima was cashiered for reading novels, contrary to the statutes made and provided—Belinda, the delightful Belinda, sealed her fate. Miss Gertrude was dismissed for catching cold, and flirting with the apothecary, a young and handsome son of Galen, who was also turned off for the same offence. Miss Jane's particular act of delict has slipt my memory,—but she went too. There was some talk of sending little Miss Augusta, the young-

est of the family, but she, poor child! never made her appearance. She was her father's favourite, and probably begged off; and they had by this time discovered at the Hall, that their young lasses had been used to too much freedom to find the air of Chapel Street agree with them. The only one we ever saw again was Miss Jemima, who, having refused a rich baronet, a good deal older than herself, for no better reason than not liking him, was sent to her aunt's on a visit of penitence; a sort of house of correction — an honourable banishment. I believe in my heart that the fair culprit would have preferred the Tread-Mill or Botany Bay, had she her choice; but there was no appeal from the *lettre de cachet* which had consigned her to Mrs. Patience's care and admonitions, so she took refuge in a dumb resentment. I never saw any one so inveterately sullen in my life. One whole week she remained in this condition, abiding, as best she might, her aunt's never-ending lectures, and the intolerable ennui of the house, during a foggy November. The next, the rejected lover arrived at the door, and was admitted; and before she had been three weeks in Chapel Street, Sir Thomas escorted her home as his intended bride. They were right in their calculations; rather than have passed the winter with Mrs. Patience, the fair Jemima would have married her grandfather.

Another niece now made her appearance, who, from circumstances and situation, seemed peculiarly fitted for the permanent companion and heiress—the orphan daughter of a younger brother, lately deceased, who had left this only child but slenderly provided for. Miss Patience (for she was her aunt's namesake) was a young woman of two-and-twenty, brought up in a remote parsonage, without the advantage of any female to direct her education, and considerably more unformed and unpolished than one is accustomed to see a young lady in this accomplished age. She was a good deal like her aunt in person—far more than comported with beauty—large-boned and red-haired, and looking at least ten years older than she really was. Ten years older, too, she was in disposition; staid, sober, thoughtful, discreet; would no more have read a novel or flirted with an apothecary, than Mrs. Patience herself.

Aunt and niece seemed made for each other. But somehow they did not do together. One does not quite know why—perhaps because they were too much alike. They were both great managers; but Miss Patience had been used to a lower range of household cares, and tormented mistress and servants by unnecessary savings and superfluous honesty. Then she was too useful; *would* make the tea, would snuff the candles, would keep the keys; affronted the housekeeper by offering to make the pastry, and the butler by taking under her care the argand lamp; which last exploit was unsuccessful enough—a lamp being a sort of machine that never will submit to female direction; a woman might as well attempt to manage a steam engine. The luminary in question was particularly refractory. It had four burners, which never, for the three nights which she continued in office, were all in action together. Some sent forth long tongues of flame, like those which issue from the crater of a volcano, giving token of the crash that was to follow; some popped outright, without warning; and some again languished, and died away, leaving behind them a most unsavoury odour. At last the restive lamp was abandoned to the butler, and light restored to the drawing-room; and had Miss Patience taken a lesson from this misadventure, all might have gone well.

But Miss Patience was not of a temperament to profit by her own errors. She went on from bad to worse; disobliged Flora by plunging her in the wash-tub, to the great improvement of her complexion; made an eternal enemy of Daphne, by a fruitless attempt to silence her most noisy tongue; and, finally, lectured Mrs. Patience herself for scolding about nothing. In short, she was a reformer, honest, zealous, uncompromising, and indiscreet, as ever wore petticoats. She had in her head the *beau ideal* of a perfect domestic government, and would be satisfied with nothing less. She could not let well alone. So that she had not been a month in that well-ordered and orderly house, before her exertions had thrown every thing into complete disorder; the servants were in rebellion, the furniture topsy-turvy; and the lady, who found herself likely to be in a situation of that dynasty of French kings who reigned *under* a *maire du palais*, in a very justifiable passion. This rightful anger, was, however, more moderately expressed than had usually happened with Mrs. Patience's causeless indignation. The aunt remonstrated, indeed, and threatened; but the niece would not stay. She was as unbending as an oak-tree; rejected all compromise; spurned at all concession; abjured all rich relations; and returned to board at a farm-house in her old neighbourhood. After this contumacy, her name was never heard in Chapel Street; and for some time the post of companion remained vacant.

At length Mrs. Patience began to break, visibly and rapidly, as the very healthy often do, affording so affecting a contrast with their former strength. In her the decline was merely bodily; neither the mind nor the temper had undergone any change; but her increasing feebleness induced her medical attendants to recommend that some one should be provided to sit with her constantly; and as she protested vehemently against any farther trial of nieces, the object was sought through the medium of an advertisement, and appeared to be completely attained when it

produced Miss Steele. How Miss Steele should have failed to please, still astonishes me. Pliant, soothing, cheerful, mild, with a wonderful command of countenance and of temper, a smiling aspect, a soft voice, a perpetual habit of assentation, and such a power over the very brute beasts, that Flora would get up to meet her, and Daphne would wag her tail at her approach—a compliment which that illustrious pug never paid before to woman. Every heart in Chapel Street did Miss Steele win, except the invulnerable heart of Mrs. Patience. *She* felt the falseness. The honey cloyed; and before two months were over, Miss Steele had followed the nieces.

After this her decline was rapid, and her latter days much tormented by legacy-hunters. A spendthrift nephew besieged her in a morning—a miserly cousin came to lose his sixpences to her at backgammon of an afternoon—a subtle attorney and an oily physician had each an eye to her hoards, if only in the form of an executorship; and her old butler, and still older housekeeper, already rich by their savings in her service, married, that they might share together the expected spoil. She died, and disappointed them all. Three wills were found. In the first, she divided her whole fortune between Flora and Daphne, and their offspring, under the direction of six trustees. In the second, she made the County-hospital her heir. In the third, the legal and effectual will, after formally disinheriting the rest of her relations, she bequeathed her whole estate, real and personal, to her honest niece Patience Wither, as a reward for her independence. And never was property better bestowed; for Patience the Second added all that was wanting to the will of Patience the First; supplied every legacy of charity and of kindness; provided for the old servants and the old pets, and had sufficient left to secure her own comfort with a man as upright and as downright as herself. They are the most English couple of my acquaintance, and the happiest. Long may they continue so! And all this happiness is owing to the natural right-mindedness and sturdy perception of character of my cross godmamma.

THE MOLE-CATCHER.

There are no more delightful or unfailing associations than those afforded by the various operations of the husbandman, and the changes on the fair face of nature. We all know that busy troops of reapers come with the yellow corn; whilst the yellow leaf brings a no less busy train of ploughmen and seedsmen preparing the ground for fresh harvests; that woodbines and wild roses, flaunting in the blossomy hedge-rows, give token of the gay bands of haymakers which enliven the meadows; and that the primroses, which begin to unfold their pale stars by the side of the green lanes, bear marks of the slow and weary female processions, the gangs of tired yet talkative bean-setters, who defile twice a day through the intricate mazes of our cross-country roads. These are general associations, as well known and as universally recognized as the union of mince-pies and Christmas. I have one, more private and peculiar, one, perhaps, the more strongly impressed on my mind, because the impression may be almost confined to myself. The full flush of violets which, about the middle of March, seldom fails to perfume the whole earth, always brings to my recollection one solitary and silent coadjutor of the husbandman's labours, as unlike a violet as possible—Isaac Bint, the mole-catcher.

I used to meet him every spring, when we lived at our old house, whose park-like paddock, with its finely-clumped oaks and elms, and its richly-timbered hedge-rows, edging into wild, rude, and solemn fir-plantations, dark, and rough, and hoary, formed for so many years my constant and favourite walk. Here, especially under the great horse-chestnut, and where the bank rose high and naked above the lane, crowned only with a tuft of golden broom; here the sweetest and prettiest of wild flowers, whose very name hath a charm, grew like a carpet under one's feet, enamelling the young green grass with their white and purple blossoms, and loading the air with their delicious fragrance; here I used to come almost every morning, during the violet-tide: and here almost every morning I was sure to meet Isaac Bint.

I think that he fixed himself the more firmly in my memory by his singular discrepancy with the beauty and cheerfulness of the scenery and the season. Isaac is a tall, lean, gloomy personage, with whom the clock of life seems to stand still. He has looked sixty-five for these last twenty years, although his dark hair and beard, and firm manly stride, almost contradict the evidence of his sunken cheeks and deeply-lined forehead. The stride is awful: he hath the stalk of a ghost. His whole air and demeanour savour of one that comes from under-ground. His appearance is "of the earth, earthy." His clothes, hands, and face, are of the colour of the mould in which he delves. The little round traps which hang behind him over one shoulder, as well as the strings of dead moles which embellish the other, are encrusted with dirt like a tomb-stone; and the staff which he plunges into the little hillocks, by which he traces the course of his small quarry, returns a hollow sound, as if tapping on the lid of a coffin. Images of the church-yard come, one does not know how, with his presence. Indeed he does officiate as assistant to the sexton in his

capacity of grave-digger, chosen, as it should seem, from a natural fitness; a fine sense of congruity in good Joseph Reed, the functionary in question, who felt, without knowing why, that, of all men in the parish, Isaac Bint was best fitted to that solemn office.

His remarkable gift of silence adds much to the impression produced by his remarkable figure. I don't think that I ever heard him speak three words in my life. An approach of that bony hand to that earthy leather cap was the greatest effort of courtesy that my daily salutations could extort from him. For this silence, Isaac has reasons good. He hath a reputation to support. His words are too precious to be wasted. Our mole-catcher, ragged as he looks, is the wise man of the village, the oracle of the village-inn, foresees the weather, charms away agues, tells fortunes by the stars, and writes notes upon the almanac—turning and twisting about the predictions after a fashion so ingenious, that it is a moot point which is oftenest wrong—Isaac Bint, or Francis Moore. In one eminent instance, our friend was, however, eminently right. He had the good luck to prophesy, before sundry witnesses—some of them sober—in the tap-room of the Bell—he then sitting, pipe in mouth, on the settle at the right-hand side of the fire, whilst Jacob Frost occupied the left;—he had the good fortune to foretell, on New Year's Day 1812, the downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte—a piece of soothsayership which has established his reputation, and dumfounded all doubters and cavillers ever since; but which would certainly have been more striking if he had not annually uttered the same prediction, from the same place, from the time the aforesaid Napoleon became first consul. But the small circumstance is entirely overlooked by Isaac and his admirers, and they believe in him, and he believes in the stars, more firmly than ever.

Our mole-catcher is, as might be conjectured, an old bachelor. Your married man hath more of this world about him — is less, so to say, planet-struck. A thorough old bachelor is Isaac, a contemner and maligner of the sex, a complete and decided woman-hater. Female frailty is the only subject on which he hath ever been known to dilate; he will not even charm away their agues, or tell their fortunes, and, indeed, holds them to be unworthy the notice of the stars.

No woman contaminates his household. He lives on the edge of a pretty bit of woodland scenery, called the Penge, in a snug cottage of two rooms, of his own building, surrounded by a garden cribbed from the waste, well fenced with quickset, and well stocked with fruit trees, herbs, and flowers. One large apple-tree extends over the roof—a pretty bit of colour when in blossom, contrasted with the thatch of the little dwelling, and relieved by the dark wood behind. Although the owner be solitary, his demesne is sufficiently populous. A long row of bee-hives extends along the warmest side of the garden—for Isaac's honey is celebrated far and near; a pig occupies a commodious sty, at one corner; and large flocks of ducks and geese (for which the Penge, whose glades are intersected by water, is famous) are generally waiting round a back gate leading to a spacious shed, far larger than Isaac's own cottage, which serves for their feeding and roosting-place. The great tameness of all these creatures—for the ducks and geese flutter round him the moment he approaches, and the very pig follows him like a dog—gives no equivocal testimony of the kindness of our mole-catcher's nature. A circumstance of recent occurrence puts his humanity beyond doubt.

Amongst the probable causes of Isaac's dislike to women, may be reckoned the fact of his living in a female neighbourhood (for the Penge is almost peopled with duck-rearers and goose-crammers of the duck and goose gender) and being himself exceedingly unpopular amongst the fair poultry-feeders of that watery vicinity. He beat them at their own weapons; produced at Midsummer geese fit for Michaelmas; and raised ducks so precocious, that the gardeners complained of them as forerunning their vegetable accompaniments; and "panting *peas* toiled after them in vain." In short the Naïads of the Penge had the mortification to find themselves driven out of B—— market by an interloper, and that interloper a man, who had no right to possess any skill in an accomplishment so exclusively feminine as duck-rearing; and being no ways inferior in another female accomplishment, called scolding, to their sister-nymphs of Billingsgate, they set up a clamour and a cackle which might rival the din of their own gooseries at feeding-time, and would inevitably have frightened from the field any competitor less impenetrable than our hero. But Isaac is not a man to shrink from so small an evil as female objurgation. He stalked through it all in mute disdain—looking now at his mole-traps, and now at the stars — pretending not to hear, and very probably not hearing. At first this scorn, more provoking than any retort, only excited his enemies to fresh attacks; but one cannot be always answering another person's silence. The flame which had blazed so fiercely, at last burnt itself out, and peace reigned once more in the green alleys of Penge-wood.

One, however, of his adversaries—his nearest neighbour—still remained unsilenced.

Margery Grover was a very old and poor woman, whom age and disease had bent almost to the earth; shaken by palsy, pinched by penury, and soured by misfortune—a moving bundle of misery and rags. Two centuries ago she would have been burnt for a witch; now she starved and grumbled on the

parish allowance; trying to eke out a scanty subsistence on the dubious profits gained by the produce of two geese and a lame gander, once the unmolested tenants of a greenish pool, situate right between her dwelling and Isaac's, but whose watery dominion had been invaded by his flourishing colony.

This was the cause of feud; and although Isaac would willingly, from a mingled sense of justice and of pity, have yielded the point to the poor old creature, especially as ponds are there almost as plentiful as blackberries, yet it was not so easy to control the habits and inclinations of their feathered subjects, who all perversely fancied that particular pool; and various accidents and skirmishes occurred, in which the ill-fed and weak birds of Margery had generally the worst of the fray. One of her early goslings was drowned—an accident which may happen even to water-fowl; and her lame gander, a sort of pet with the poor old woman, injured in his well leg; and Margery vented curses as bitter as those of Sycorax: and Isaac, certainly the most superstitious personage in the parish—the most thorough believer in his own gifts and predictions—was fain to nail a horse-shoe on his door for the defence of his property, and to wear one of his own ague charms about his neck for his personal protection.

Poor old Margery! A hard winter came; and the feeble, tottering creature shook in the frosty air like an aspen-leaf; and the hovel in which she dwelt—for nothing could prevail on her to try the shelter of the work-house—shook like herself at every blast. She was not quite alone either in the world or in her poor hut: husband, children, and grandchildren had passed away; but one young and innocent being, a great-grandson, the last of her descendants, remaining a helpless dependant on one almost as helpless as himself.

Little Harry Grover was a shrunken, stunted boy, of five years old; tattered and squalid, like his grandame, and, at first sight, presented almost as miserable a specimen of childhood, as Margery herself did of age. There was even a likeness between them; although the fierce blue eye of Margery had in the boy a mild appealing look, which entirely changed the whole expression of the countenance. A gentle and peaceful boy was Harry, and, above all, a useful. It was wonderful how many ears of corn in the autumn, and sticks in the winter, his little hands could pick up! how well he could make a fire, and boil the kettle, and sweep the hearth, and cram the goslings! Never was a handier boy or a trustier; and when the united effects of cold, and age and rheumatism confined poor Margery to her poor bed, the child continued to perform his accustomed offices; fetching the money from the vestry, buying the loaf at the baker's, keeping house, and nursing the sick woman, with a kindness and thoughtfulness, which none but those who know the careful ways to which necessity trains cottage children, would deem credible; and Margery, a woman of strong passions, strong prejudices, and strong affections, who had lived in and for the desolate boy, felt the approach of death embittered by the certainty that the work-house, always the scene of her dread and loathing, would be the only refuge for the poor orphan.

Death, however, came on visibly and rapidly; and she sent for the overseer to beseech him to put Harry to board in some decent cottage; she could not die in peace until he had promised; the fear of the innocent child's being contaminated by wicked boys and godless women preyed upon her soul; she implored, she conjured. The overseer, a kind but timid man, hesitated, and was beginning a puzzled speech about the bench and the vestry, when another voice was heard from the door of the cottage.

"Margery," said our friend Isaac, "will you trust Harry to me? I am a poor man, to be sure; but between earning and saving, there 'll be enough for me and little Harry. 'T is as good a boy as ever lived, and I 'll try to keep him so. Trust him to me, and I 'll be a father to him. I can't say more."

"God bless thee, Isaac Bint! God bless thee!" was all poor Margery could reply.

They were the last words she ever spoke. And little Harry is living with our good mole-catcher, and is growing plump and rosy; and Margery's other pet, the lame gander, lives and thrives with them too.

MADEMOISELLE THERESE.

One of the prettiest dwellings in our neighbourhood, is the Lime Cottage at Burley-Hatch. It consists of a small low-browed habitation, so entirely covered with jessamine, honeysuckle, passion-flowers, and china-roses, as to resemble a bower, and is placed in the centre of a large garden,—turf and flowers before, vegetables and fruit trees behind, backed by a superb orchard, and surrounded by a quickset hedge, so thick, and close, and regular, as to form an impregnable defence to the territory which it encloses—a thorny rampart, a living and growing *chevaux-de-frise*. On either side of the next gravel-walk, which leads from the outer gate to the door of the cottage, stand the large and beautiful trees to which it owes its name; spreading their strong, broad shadow over the turf beneath, and sending, on a summer afternoon, their rich, spicy fragrance half across the irregular village green, dappled with wood and water, and gay with sheep, cattle, and children, which divides them, at the distance of a quarter of a mile, from the little hamlet of Burley, its venerable

church and handsome rectory, and its short straggling street of cottages, and country shops.

Such is the habitation of Thérèse de G., an emigrée of distinction, whose aunt having married an English officer, was luckily able to afford her niece an asylum during the horrors of the Revolution, and to secure to her a small annuity, and the Lime Cottage after her death. There she has lived for these five-and-thirty years, gradually losing sight of her few and distant foreign connexions, and finding all her happiness in her pleasant home and her kind neighbours—a standing lesson of cheerfulness and contentment.

A very popular person is Mademoiselle Thérèse — popular both with high and low; for the prejudice which the country people almost universally entertain against foreigners, vanished directly before the charm of her manners, the gaiety of her heart, and the sunshine of a temper that never knows a cloud. She is so kind to them too, so liberal of the produce of her orchard and garden, so full of resource in their difficulties, and so sure to afford sympathy if she have nothing else to give, that the poor all idolize Mademoiselle. Among the rich, she is equally beloved. No party is complete without the pleasant Frenchwoman, whose amenity and cheerfulness, her perfect, general politeness, her attention to the old, the poor, the stupid and the neglected, are felt to be invaluable in society. Her conversation is not very powerful either, nor very brilliant; she never says any thing remarkable—but then it is so good-natured, so genuine, so unpretending, so constantly up and alive, that one would feel its absence more than that of a more showy and ambitious talker; to say nothing of the charm which it derives from her language, which is alternately the most graceful and purest French, and the most diverting and absurd broken English;—a dialect in which, whilst contriving to make herself perfectly understood both by gentle and simple, she does also contrive, in the course of an hour, to commit more blunders, than all the other foreigners in England make in a month.

Her appearance betrays her country almost as much as her speech. She is a French-looking little personage, with a slight, active figure, exceedingly nimble and alert in every movement; a round and darkly-complexioned face, somewhat faded and *passée*, but still striking from the laughing eyes, the bland and brilliant smile, and the great mobility of expression. Her features, pretty as they are, want the repose of an English countenance; and her air, gesture, and dress, are decidedly foreign, all alike deficient in the English charm of quietness. Nevertheless, in her youth, she must have been pretty; so pretty that some of our young ladies scandalized at the idea of finding their favourite an old maid, have invented sundry legends to excuse the solecism, and talk of duels fought *pour l'amour de ses beaux yeux*, and of a betrothed lover guillotined in the Revolution. And the thing may have been so; although one meets everywhere with old maids who have been pretty, and whose lovers have not been guillotined; and although Mademoiselle Thérèse has not, to do her justice, the least in the world the air of a heroine crossed in love. The thing may be so; but I doubt it much. I rather suspect our fair Demoiselle of having been in her youth a little of a flirt. Even during her residence at Burley-Hatch, hath not she indulged in divers very distant, very discreet, very decorous, but still very evident flirtations? Did not Doctor Abdy, the portly, ruddy schoolmaster of B., dangle after her for three mortal years, holidays excepted? And did she not refuse him at last? And Mr. Foreclose, the thin, withered, wrinkled city solicitor, a man, so to say, smoke-dried, who comes down every year to Burley for the air, did not he do suit and service to her during four long vacations, with the same ill success? Was not Sir Thomas himself a little smitten? Nay, even now, does not the good Major, a halting veteran of seventy—but really it is too bad to tell tales out of the parish—all that is certain is, that Mademoiselle Thérèse might have changed her name long before now, had she so chosen; and that it is most probable that she will never change it at all.

Her household consists of her little maid Betsy, a cherry-cheeked, blue-eyed country lass, brought up by herself, who, with a full clumsy figure, and a fair, innocent, unmeaning countenance, copies, as close as these obstacles will permit, the looks and gestures of her alert and vivacious mistress, and has even caught her broken English; — of a fat lap-dog, called Fido, silky, sleepy, and sedate; and of a beautiful white Spanish ass, called Donnabella, an animal docile and spirited, far beyond the generality of that despised race, who draws her little donkey-chaise half the country over, runs to her the moment she sees her, and eats roses, bread and apples from her hand; but who, accustomed to be fed and groomed, harnessed and driven only by females, resists and rebels the moment she is approached by the rougher sex; has overturned more boys, and kicked more men, than any donkey in the kingdom; and has acquired such a character for restiveness among the grooms in the neighbourhood, that when Mademoiselle Thérèse goes out to dinner, Betsy is fain to go with her to drive Donnabella home again, and to return to fetch her mistress in the evening.

If every body is delighted to receive this most welcome visiter, so is every body delighted to accept her graceful invitations, and meet to eat strawberries at Burley-Hatch. Oh, how pleasant are those summer after-

noons, sitting under the blossomed limes, with the sun shedding a golden light through the broad branches, the bees murmuring overhead, roses and lilies all about us, and the choicest fruit served up in wicker baskets of her own making—itself a picture! the guests looking so pleased and happy, and the kind hostess the gayest and happiest of all. Those are pleasant meetings; nor are her little winter parties less agreeable, when two or three female friends assembled round their coffee, she will tell thrilling stories of that terrible Revolution, so fertile in great crimes and great virtues; or gayer anecdotes of the brilliant days preceding that convulsion, the days which Madame de Genlis has described so well, when Paris was the capital of pleasure, and amusement the business of life; illustrating her descriptions by a series of spirited drawings of costumes and characters done by herself, and always finishing by producing a group of Louis Seize, Marie Antoinette, the Dauphin, and Madame Elizabeth, as she had last seen them at Versailles—the only recollection that ever brings tears into her smiling eyes.

Mademoiselle Thérèse's loyalty to the Bourbons, was in truth a very real feeling. Her family had been about the court, and she had imbibed an enthusiasm for the royal sufferers natural to a young and a warm heart—she loved the Bourbons, and hated Napoleon with like ardour. All her other French feelings had for some time been a little modified. She was not quite so sure as she had been, that France was the only country, and Paris the only city of the world; that Shakspeare was a barbarian, and Milton no poet; that the perfume of English limes was nothing compared to French orange trees; that the sun never shone in England; and that sea-coal fires were bad things. She still, indeed, would occasionally make these assertions, especially if dared to make them; but her faith in them was shaken. Her loyalty to her legitimate king, was, however, as strong as ever, and that loyalty had nearly cost us our dear Mademoiselle. After the Restoration, she hastened as fast as a steam-boat and diligence could carry her, to enjoy the delight of seeing once more the Bourbons at the Thuilleries; took leave, between smiles and tears, of her friends, and of Burley-Hatch, carrying with her a branch of the lime-tree, then in blossom, and commissioning her old lover, Mr. Foreclose, to dispose of the cottage: but in less than three months, luckily before Mr. Foreclose had found a purchaser, Mademoiselle Thérèse came home again. She complained of nobody; but times were altered. The house in which she was born was pulled down; her friends were scattered; her kindred dead; Madame did not remember her (she had probably never heard of her in her life;) the king did not know her again (poor man! he had not seen her for these thirty years;) Paris was a new city; the French were a new people; she missed the sea-coal fires; and for the stunted orange-trees at the Thuilleries, what were they compared with the blossomed limes of Burley-Hatch!

LOST AND FOUND.

Any body may be lost in a wood. It is well for me to have so good an excuse for my wanderings; for I am rather famous for such misadventures, and have sometimes been accused by my kindest friends of committing intentional blunders, and going astray out of malice prepense. To be sure, when in two successive rambles, I contrived to get mazed on Burghfield Common, and bewildered in Kibe's Lane, those exploits did seem to overpass the common limits of stupidity. But in a wood, and a strange wood, a new place, a fresh country, untrodden ground beneath the feet, unknown landmarks before the eyes, wiser folks than I might require the silken clue of Rosamond, or the bag of ashes given to Finette Cendron (Anglice, Cinderella) by the good fairy her godmother, to help them home again. Now my luck exceeded even hers of the Glass Slipper, for I found something not unlike the good fairy herself, in the pleasant earthly guise of an old friend. But I may as well begin my story.

About two years ago we had the misfortune to lose one of the most useful and popular inbitants of our village, Mrs. Bond, the butter-woman. She—for although there was a very honest and hard-working Farmer Bond, who had the honour to be Mrs. Bond's husband, she was so completely the personage of the family, that nobody ever thought of him—she lived on a small dairy-farm, at the other side of the parish, where she had reared ten children in comfort and respectability, contriving, in all years, and in all seasons, to be flourishing, happy, and contented, and to drive her tilted cart twice a week into B., laden with the richest butter, the freshest eggs, and the finest poultry of the county. Never was a market-woman so reliable as Mrs. Bond, so safe to deal with, or so pleasant to look at. She was a neat comely woman of five-and-forty, or thereabout, with dark hair, laughing eyes, a bright smile, and a brighter complexion—red and white like a daisy. People used to say how pretty she must have been; but I think she was then in the prime of her good looks; just as a full-blown damask rose is more beautiful than the same flower in the bud.

Very pleasant she was to look at, and still pleasanter to talk to; she was so gentle, so cheerful, so respectful, and so kind. Every body in the village loved Mrs. Bond. Even

Lizzy and May, the two most aristocratical of its inhabitants, and the most tenacious of the distinctions of rank, would run to meet the butter-cart, as if it were a carriage and four. A mark of preference which the good-humoured dairywoman did not fail to acknowledge and confirm by gifts suited to their respective tastes, an occasional pitcher of buttermilk to May, and a stick with cherries tied around it to poor Lizzy.

Nor was Mrs. Bond's bounty confined to largesses of so suspicious a nature, as presents to the pets of a good customer. I have never known any human being more thoroughly and universally generous, more delicate in her little gifts, or with so entire an absence of design or artifice in her attentions. It was a prodigality of kindness that seemed never weary of well-doing. What posies of pinks and sweetwilliams, backed by marjoram and rosemary, she used to carry to the two poor old ladies who lodged at the pastry-cook's at B.! What fagots of lilac and laburnum she would bring to deck the poor widow Hay's open hearth! What baskets of water-cresses, the brownest, the bitterest, and the crispest of the year, for our fair neighbour, the nymph of the shoe-shop, a delicate girl, who could only be tempted into her breakfast by that pleasant herb! What pots of honey for John Brown's cough! What gooseberries and currants for the baker's little children! And as soon as her great vine ripened, what grapes for every body! No wonder that when Mrs. Bond left the parish, to occupy a larger farm in a distant county, her absence was felt as a misfortune by the whole village; that poor Lizzy inquired after her every day for a week, and that May watched for the tilted cart every Wednesday and Friday for a month or more.

I myself joined very heartily in the general lamentation. But time and habit reconcile us to most privations, and I must confess, that much as I liked her, I had nearly forgotten our good butter-woman, until an adventure which befell me last week, placed me once more in the way of her ready kindness.

I was on a visit at a considerable distance from home, in one of the most retired parts of Oxfordshire. Nothing could be more beautiful than the situation, or less accessible; shut in amongst woody hills, remote from great towns, with deep chalky roads, almost impassable, and a broad bridgeless river, coming, as if to intercept your steps, whenever you did seem to have fallen into a beaten track. It was exactly the country and the season in which to wander about all day long.

One fair morning I set out on my accustomed ramble. The sun was intensely hot; the sky almost cloudless; I had climbed a long abrupt ascent, to enjoy the sight of the magnificent river, winding like a snake amidst the richly-clothed hills; the pretty village, with its tapering spire, and the universal freshness and brilliancy of the gay and smiling prospect—too gay perhaps! I gazed till I became dazzled with the glare of the sunshine, oppressed by the very brightness, and turned into a beech-wood by the side of the road, to seek relief from the overpowering radiance. These beech-woods should rather be called coppices. They are cut down occasionally, and consist of long flexible stems, growing out of the old roots. But they are like no other coppices, or rather none that can be compared with them. The young beechen stems, perfectly free from underwood, go arching and intertwining over-head, forming a thousand mazy paths, covered by a natural trellis; the shining green leaves, just bursting from their golden sheaths, contrasting with the smooth silvery bark, shedding a cool green light around, and casting a thousand dancing shadows on the mossy flowery path, pleasant to the eye and to the tread, a fit haunt for wood-nymph or fairy. There is always much of interest in the mystery of a wood; the uncertainty produced by the confined boundary; the objects which crowd together, and prevent the eye from penetrating to distance; the strange flickering mixture of shadow and sunshine, the sudden flight of birds—oh, it was enchanting! I wandered on, quite regardless of time or distance, now admiring the beautiful wood-sorrel which sprang up amongst the old roots—now plucking the fragrant wood-roof—now trying to count the countless varieties of woodland-moss, till, at length, roused by my foot's catching in a rich trail of the white-veined ivy, which crept, wreathing and interlaced, over the ground, I became aware that I was completely lost, had entirely forsaken all track, and out-travelled all land-marks. The wood was, I knew, extensive, and the ground so tumbled about, that every hundred yards presented some flowery slope or broken dell, which added greatly to the picturesqueness of the scenery, but very much diminished my chance of discovery or extrication.

In this emergency, I determined to proceed straight onward, trusting in this way to reach at last one side of the wood, although I could not at all guess which; and I was greatly solaced, after having walked about a quarter of a mile, to find myself crossed by a rude cart-track; and still more delighted, on proceeding a short distance farther, to hear sounds of merriment and business; none of the softest, certainly, but which gave tokens of rustic habitation; and to emerge suddenly from the close wood, amongst an open grove of huge old trees, oaks, with their brown plaited leaves, cherries, covered with snowy garlands, and beeches, almost as gigantic as those of Windsor Park, contrasting, with their enormous trunks and majestic spread of bough, the light and flexible stems of the coppice I had left.

I had come out at one of the highest points of the wood, and now stood on a platform overlooking a scene of extraordinary beauty. A little to the right, in a very narrow valley, stood an old farm-house, with pointed roofs and porch and pinnacles, backed by a splendid orchard, which lay bathed in the sunshine, exhaling its fresh aromatic fragrance, all one flower; just under me was a strip of rich meadow land, through which a stream ran sparkling, and directly opposite a ridge of hanging coppices, surrounding and crowning, as it were, an immense old chalk-pit, which, overhung by bramble, ivy, and a hundred pendent weeds, irregular and weather-stained, had an air as venerable and romantic as some grey ruin. Seen in the gloom and stillness of evening, or by the pale glimpses of the moon, it would have required but little aid from the fancy to picture out the broken shafts and mouldering arches of some antique abbey. But, besides that daylight is the sworn enemy of such illusions, my attention was imperiously claimed by a reality of a very different kind. One of the gayest and noisiest operations of rural life—sheep-washing—was going on in the valley below—

> "the turmoil that unites
> Clamour of boys with innocent despites
> Of barking dogs, and bleatings from strange fear."
> WORDSWORTH.

All the inhabitants of the farm seemed assembled in the meadow. I counted a dozen at least of men and boys of all ages, from the stout, sun-burnt, vigorous farmer of fifty, who presided over the operation, down to the eight-year-old urchin, who, screaming, running, and shaking his ineffectual stick after an eloped sheep, served as a sort of aide-de-camp to the sheep-dog. What a glorious scene of confusion it was! what shouting! what scuffling! what glee! Four or five young men, and one amazon of a barefooted girl, with her petticoats tucked up to her knees, stood in the water where it was pent between two hurdles, ducking, sousing, and holding down by main force, the poor, frightened, struggling sheep, who kicked, and plunged, and bleated, and butted, and in spite of their imputed innocence, would certainly, in the ardour of self-defence, have committed half-a-dozen homicides, if their power had equalled their inclination. The rest of the party were fully occupied; some in conducting the purified sheep, who showed a strong disposition to go the wrong way back to their quarters; others in leading the uncleansed part of the flock to their destined ablution, from which they also testified a very ardent and active desire to escape. Dogs, men, boys, and girls were engaged in marshalling these double processions, the order of which was constantly interrupted by the outbreaking of some runaway sheep, who turned the march into a pursuit, to the momentary increase of the din, which seemed already to have reached the highest possible pitch.

The only quiet persons in the field were a delicate child of nine years old, and a blooming woman of forty-five—a comely blooming woman, with dark hair, bright eyes, and a complexion like a daisy, who stood watching the sheep-washers with the happiest smiles, and was evidently the mother of half the lads and lasses in the melée. It could be, and it was no other than my friend Mrs. Bond, and resolving to make myself and my difficulties known to her, I scrambled down no very smooth or convenient path, and keeping a gate between me and the scene of action, contrived, after sundry efforts, to attract her attention.

Here of course my difficulties ceased. But if I were to tell how glad she was to see her old neighbour, how full of kind questions and of hospitable cares,—how she would cut the great cake intended for the next day's sheep-shearing, would tap her two-year-old currant wine, would gather a whole bush of early honeysuckles, and, finally, would see me home herself, I being, as she observed, rather given to losing my way;—if I were to tell all these things, when should I have done? I will rather conclude in the words of an old French Fairy tale—Je crains déjà d'avoir abusé de la patience du lecteur. Je finis avant qu'il me dise de finir.

PREFACE.*

THE continued encouragement afforded by the Public to her successive series of Village Sketches, has induced the Writer to bring forward a Fourth Volume, on nearly the same plan, which she earnestly hopes may prove as fortunate as its predecessors.

A few of the stories were composed purposely for children; but as people do not, now-a-days, write down to those little folks, and as the Authoress has herself, in common with her wisers and betters, a strong propensity to dip into children's books when they happen to fall in her way, she by no means thought it necessary to omit them.

Three Mile Cross, April 23, 1830.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

TO MISS W.

Feb. 20, 1830.

No, my dearest Mary, the severe domestic calamity which we have experienced will not, as you expect, and as many of our other

*To the fourth volume, as originally published.

friends seem to anticipate, drive us from our favourite village. On the contrary, the cottage home, in which she, used to such very different accommodation, closed her peaceful and blameless life, the country church in which her remains lie buried, and the kind neighbours by whom she was so universally respected and beloved, are now doubly endeared to us by their connexion with her whom we have lost. There is no running away from a great grief. Happy are they to whom, as in our case, it comes softened and sanctified by the recollection of the highest and most amiable virtues clothed in manners the most feminine and the most ladylike. To them memory will be the best comforter, for such memories are rare. No, dearest Mary, we certainly shall not think of removing on this account.

But, besides that our affliction is too real and too recent* to dwell upon, I have no right to sadden you with my sadness. I will rather try to escape from it myself and to answer, as best I may, your kind questions on other subjects, particularly those respecting the place in which you take so kind a concern, and such of its inhabitants as have had the good fortune to interest you.

Our Village, (many thanks for your polite inquiry) continues to stand pretty much where it did, and has undergone as little change in the last two years as any hamlet of its inches in the county. Just now it is in an awful state of dirt and dinginess, the white nuisance of snow having subsided into the brown nuisance of mud in the roads, whilst the slippery treachery of ice is converted into the less dangerous but more deplorable misery of sloppiness on the footway. They talk of the snow as having been so many feet deep. I wonder if any one has undertaken to sound the depth of the dirt. Over-pattens and over-boots give but a faint and modified notion of the discomforts of a country-walk during the present fine thaw, to say nothing of the heavy clinging dripping annoyance, called draggled-tails.

We feel these evils the more since they are of a kind from which our light dry gravelly soil generally protects us. And even now we have the comfort of knowing, not so much that we are better off than our neighbours, but that they are worse off than ourselves—a comfort, the value of which nobody who has not had cause to feel it can duly appreciate. Their superior calamity, arises not merely from the snow and the thaw, grievances which we endured in common, but from the Loddon on one side of us, and the Kennet and Thames on the other, having embraced so fair an opportunity of playing their usual pranks and overflowed the country round, as if governed by the malicious water sprite, (I forget the gentleman's name) who popped his head out of a well and flooded the heroine's castle and territory in Undine. So far as all the meadows and half the cellars North, South, East, and West, of our village being under water may afford us comfort, we possess it in perfection. Another consolation, although rather prospective than present, may be found in the fact, that to judge from certain islands of gravel rising at intervals through the mud, our road is about to undergo the operation of mending—that excruciating operation which horses, drivers, and passengers hate so thoroughly in its progress, and like so well in its consequences. In our village proper, other changes have we none.

On the outskirts of the parish, indeed, improvement hath not been idle. The fine place on the top of the hill, the Park as it is called, hath undergone no less a transmogrification than that of Grecian to Gothic, one of those changes which people hold themselves privileged to criticise; and they are seldom slack to exercise that privilege, because to discover faults looks wise, but which in richness and variety generally contrives to please the eye, and to be quite as pretty as if all the world were agreed to call it so. I have no doubt, judging from the praise and the blame, but I shall like the building. By the way, the Park, our only point of change, hath undergone in its own person alteration enough to serve the whole parish. Besides the Gothic casing of the mansion, the grounds have been improved; plantations of twenty years' growth transplanted; trees double that age made to change sides, according to the bold practice of now-a-days; and the hill on which the house stands pared off to let in the water, by a body of excavators (navigators our villagers by an ingenious slip-slopism were pleased to call them) imported from afar. Altogether the Park is a new place.

Amongst our inhabitants we have the usual portion of mutability. Besides those graver changes of which the Parish Register keeps account, there has been considerable movement and fluctuation in our little colony. Many of the old settlers have migrated and some new ones have arrived. The most notable of these changes is the departure of the female blacksmith and her noisy progeny, who are now dispersed over half the forges in the county, to the probable improvement of their din and the certain abatement of ours. Not that we are particularly quiet now—that would be too much to say, but the village clamour has changed its character. Before there was a sort of contest in loudness between the geese and the boys; now, the geese have it hollow. Nobody thinks of complaining of the children, or even of hearing them, whilst their rivals are railed at from morning to night, and have even become of note enough to be threatened with an indictment.

* My beloved and excellent mother died on the morning of New Year's day.

The present occupier of the forge is John Ford, the civil intelligent husband of our pretty neighbour, the lass of the shoe-shop. They are fairly settled in the blacksmith's territories with their little girl, who, being the only child of an only child, and having two grandfathers, two grandmothers, and one great-grandfather, is of course cried up for the most wonderful wonder of wonders that ever trod the earth; and really without being her grandmother or her great-grandmother, I cannot help admiring the little damsel myself, it's such a delicate fairy, so merry and so full of glee.

In addition to our new blacksmith, we have a new shoemaker, a new collar-maker, a new carpenter, and a new baker, although the last mentioned personage is non-resident, and only perambulates the village in his cart, to say nothing of the newest of all our novelties, a new schoolmaster, elected yesterday. Each of these functionaries is of some note in his particular calling, especially the baker, who is eminent for his loaves which are crusty, and his temper which is not; but the acquisition which interests me most, is the new occupant of the wheelwright's pretty apartments, a lady whom you must know some day or other, and who is to me a delightful companion and a most valuable friend. She must never go away, for what would our village do without her!

Now to the rustic lovers after whom you inquired with so kind an interest: Jem and Mabel are married; Joel and Harriet are not; their affair stands much as it did, a regular engagement with intermitting fits of flirtation on the lady's side and of jealousy on the part of the gentleman. Some day or other I suppose they will marry; but really they are such a handsome couple and their little quarrels are so amusing, that it will be quite a pity to put an end to the courtship. The third and last pair of turtle-doves, Daniel Tubb and Sally North, remain also unwedded in spite of the indications on Valentine's day, which even the experience of the lame clerk deemed infallible. Somehow or other the affair went off. Poor Stephen Long the other hero of that adventure—How like you it is to take pity on one whom nobody else thinks worth caring for!—Poor Master Stephen, our small London apprentice met during that very visit with another misfortune in the same line, and as the poor little person seems rather to have taken your fancy, I may as well tell you the story now.

Before his adventure with Miss Sally North was fairly over, that is to say before that relentless damsel had set him free from her basket,* Master Stephen Long began to discover, as rejected lovers sometimes do, that he would not have been accepted for the world; not that he bore any ill will to the young person, but that he had no taste for giantesses, and a particular aversion for hoydens and tomboys and women who trespassed against the delicacy of their sex; and no sooner was he safely dismounted from the fair head on which he had remained perched in most ludicrous wrath, restrained from jumping down by a mingled fear of hurting Sally and hurting himself, and looking much like one of those non-descript animals rampant which so often serve as a crest in heraldry;—no sooner was he fairly on the ground than he communicated in very chosen terms to his obdurate mistress, his opinion of the escape which he had had in not marrying her, and bowed himself off. It is said that our rural coquet, for as little as she cared for her cockney lover, was somewhat piqued at this cool resignation; and that his portly and good-humoured rival, her chosen Valentine, had a good deal of huffing and brusquerie to endure on the occasion, Sally having followed the example of her betters, by revenging on the innocent object in her power the affronts offered her by the culprit who was not;—nay, so much did she take his defection to heart, that it was even whispered in the village, that a tender speech, or a copy of verses, or a new ribbon from Stephen, might have replaced their love affair in statu quo.

None such arrived. Stephen had done with her. "It had been a boyish choice," as he said to himself, with all the importance of a young gentleman, who has just entered his nineteenth year, "a boyish mistake; his next choice should be wiser, wise and deliberate; he had plenty of time before him." Accordingly he walked round the parish, and fell in love again, or thought he fell in love, before noon on the same day. Nothing so easy as catching a heart on the rebound; especially such a heart as Master Stephen's, who, in spite of his being the very cleverest boy in Aberleigh School, and one of the cleverest 'prentices in Cheapside, a proser, a poet, an orator, and a critic, was between conceit and kind-heartedness and a spice of romance, one of the simplest persons that ever existed. It was a good-natured mannikin too, and a generous; and would not have seemed so very ugly or so very small, or so ridiculously like the picture of the monkey that has seen the world in the older editions of Gay's Fables, but for the caricature of fashion exhibited in its dress, and the perking strutting air, the elevated chin, the tiptoe walk, and the vain endeavour to pass for tall, which pervaded the whole little person, producing exactly such a copy of the gait and mien of a full-grown man, as that ambitious bird a he bantam exhibits of the size and actions of the great cock of the farm-yard. A kind youth nevertheless was Stephen Long, a kind and well-disposed youth; dutiful to his grandmother who was very fond of him, and being nearly blind, approached nearer his own estimate of his per-

*See page 170.

sonal graces than any body else; respectful to his father; affectionate to his brothers and sisters; and civil to the whole world. He made the tour of the village that very morning, and it was on a visit to his old acquaintance the mistress of the shop, that he had the good luck to lose over again the heart which would otherwise have hung so heavily on his hands.

Peggy Norman, his new lady-love, was a little serving maiden, living at Captain Selby's, a family of some gentility in Aberleigh, and had the neatness of dress, and the general gentillesse of appearance belonging almost exclusively to the class of soubrettes. Pretty she could hardly be called; and yet there was much attraction in her trim girlish figure, so light and round and youthful, her thick curling brown hair, the dazzling red and white of her brilliant complexion, as brightly contrasted as the colours in an apple-blossom, the broad smile disclosing a set of white even teeth, to say nothing of a very pretty dimple, and the whole expression of her bright blue eyes, whose arch glance when suddenly thrown up, formed an excellent accompaniment to the broad dimpled smile, and harmonized well with the naiveté and espièglerie of her voice and manner. It was the most agreeable manner that could be conceived, very gentle, very respectful, and very gay. Mrs. Selby, pleased with her young liquid voice, her pretty accent, her constant simplicity and occasional acuteness, and exceedingly amused by the new form in which her own opinions and remarks were sometimes returned to her by her docile attendant, had encouraged her light-hearted prattle, so that without any touch of presumption or pertness, Peggy felt the security of pleasing, proper to a spoilt child, joined to a constitutional desire to please which spoilt children are seldom lucky enough to possess. She was a perfect little rosebud of fifteen, and all the more dangerous to Stephen Long because she was little, he having contracted a remarkable aversion to the entire race of giantesses.

The errand on which Peggy had been sent to the territories of Mrs. White, being of a nature to detain her a considerable time, she having been ordered to match unmatchable silk with unprocurable cotton, Stephen had ample opportunity for falling in love, and even for making love; and before the grand question was decided whether the yellow, the blue, or the brown balls, of which Mrs. White's stock was composed, made the nearest approach to her green pattern, a very promising flirtation had commenced, greatly promoted by the complaisant mistress of the shop, who invited both parties to drink tea with her on the succeeding evening.

They met accordingly, and the love-affair proceeded most prosperously. Stephen had the happiness to find in this new flame a degree of literary acquirement which stood in the most advantageous contrast to the positive duncicality of Sally North. Mrs. Selby being a literary lady, Peggy had heard the names of authors and the titles of books; she had even a personal acquaintance with the outside of periodical literature, knew the colours of magazines, the backs of reviews, and the shapes of newspapers; could tell at a glance the Edinburgh from the Quarterly, and the John Bull from the Literary Gazette; was familiar with the grim face on Blackwood, and knew at a touch the Old Monthly from the New. Stephen was in raptures. In another respect too, they met on even terms. Peggy had recently accompanied her mistress to London, had spent a whole fortnight there, and was so charmed with the gaiety and hurly-burly of that great noisy good-for-nothing pleasant place, always delightful to healthy and lively youth, that she could talk of nothing else, and had certainly brought back with her a slight feeling of contempt (pity she was pleased to call it) for the less fortunate bumpkins who had never heard the sound of Bow Bell. True it is that in talking of London, Peggy and Stephen meant very different places, — Stephen spoke of his home, the city; Peggy of hers, the west end; — and a few mistakes and cross-readings ensued, especially on Peggy's part, who took Oxford-street for Cheapside, and Westminster Abbey for St. Paul's. But all passed under the general denomination of *Town*. — "There is a river in *London*, and also, moreover, there is a river in *Westminster*, and there is salmons in both." And Peggy talked and listened and smiled; and Stephen went home and wrote a sonnet to "his mistress's eye-brow."

The next day (Sunday,) they met again after church, and took a walk together in the evening, in the course of which they discovered another subject common to both, that subject which those who like it at all find so delightful — the Theatre. Stephen, certainly the most literary of hosiers' apprentices, was especially enthusiastic on the drama, had twice appeared at a private theatre, and entertained a strong desire to embrace the stage as a profession as soon as he was out of his time. Now Peggy had herself been at three plays, and talked of them with some discretion; knew Comedy from Opera, and Tragedy from Farce. But it was not a talker that Stephen required on this theme; a listener was what he wanted; and no one ever acted audience whilst he rehearsed the story of his two appearances in Romeo and Richard the Third, better than the little blue-eyed girl who hung on his arm so admiringly as they walked round Aberleigh Green. Nothing, he said, could exceed the applause with which his debût in Romeo had been greeted by a large audience of city 'prentices, and shopwomen, troubled only by the astounding height of a bouncing Juliet, half as tall again as himself,

who quite spoilt, as he observed, the proportions of the play. Again they made the tour of the Green, and Peggy had half promised to study the part of Juliet, when a difference arose out of this very subject which put an abrupt end to their courtship.

From his personal adventures Stephen wandered to a general critique on plays and actors, especially to a warm encomium on one great actor, who was as he said *his* model. Peggy (who had seen the tragedian in question in Othello) assented heartily to the panegyric, adding, "that it was a great pity so clever a man should be black."*

"Black!" ejaculated the astonished Stephen; "Black!!"

"Yes," answered Peggy, "black; a blackamoor, a negro."

"Blackamoor!! Negro!!!" re-echoed Stephen, more and more astounded. "Mr. —— black! Are you dreaming? He's as fair as you are. What do you mean? What can you mean?"

"What I say," returned Peggy. "Did not I see him with my own eyes, and was not he as black as a chimney-sweeper? and did not his wife and every body talk of his complexion all through the play? You need not stand there, Mr. Stephen, holding up your hands and eyes, and looking as if you thought me a fool. I am not such a dunce as Sally North. I have been to London, and been to the play, and what I have seen I believe for all your strange looks. He's as black as my master's great greyhound,"—continued Peggy, who had gradually talked herself into such a passion, that her cheeks generally like a cabbage-rose were of the colour of a red cabbage—"as black as your hat."

Stephen on his part was for the first time in his life dumfounded; first at the singular mixture of ignorance and simplicity implied in the assertion and the reasons brought to support it; secondly at the impudence of the little country damsel who did not know Westminster Abbey from St. Paul's, and yet ventured to impugn his authority on such a point. "Let me tell you—" he began, when a little recovered from his consternation, "Let me tell you, child—"

"Child!" interrupted Peggy, touched on the very point of dignity; "child yourself! It is well known that I am sixteen all but eight months, and as for you, you'll look like a boy all the days of your life. You play Tragedy! Why you're hardly tall enough for Punch. Child indeed! And I almost sixteen! Never come near me again, Mr. Long, I have nothing to say to you—" and off marched Peggy; and poor Stephen twice rejected in three days, would certainly have hanged himself in Sally North's scarlet garters, had he not had the lucky resource of tender poesy, that admirable vent-peg of disappointed love. He went back to Town, and wrote an elegy, and we have heard no more of him since.

So much for our villagers. With regard to my own small territory, it has lost one of its prime ornaments; my beautiful greyhound Mayflower is dead. Old age and the cold weather were too much for her. Poor pretty May! She lies under a rose-tree in a place she liked well. And my garden, "that bright bit of colour," as you call it, and which in the summer so well deserves the name; my garden is much like a small field newly harrowed, except that a grove of sticks seems to indicate the site of bulbs and perennials and other underground treasures. Matters are mending though. Two mild days have brought up a few green buds just peeping above the earth, and the borders begin to show symptoms of floweriness. The snowdrop, the crocus, the hepatica, and the aconite are already in blossom (to think of being able to count the flowers in my garden!) and the Mezereon, and the Pyrus Japonica will be out to-morrow. Things are certainly mending. My green-house looks really spring-like, and the robin which has inhabited that warm shelter during the whole winter, making no further excursion than to the honeysuckle opposite and back again, has ventured to the great pear-tree, and has got a companion, the rogue! I should not wonder if he built him a nest, and only visited us when he wanted bread crums.

The green-house does really give token of spring. You do not know my green-house, dear Mary, but you must come and see it. You have promised; have you not? At all events you must come. It is the simplest thing that ever was, and the prettiest—an excavation in a barn with glass in front looking on my nosegay of a garden, and serving, like Cowper's, the double purpose of a shelter for the geraniums in winter, and a summer parlour for ourselves. When they go out, we go in. Last year which was generally so mild, a short sharp frost took us by surprise, and killed all my plants; but this severe winter we were prepared, and have saved them—and you must come to see them—and to see us—and then we shall like the green-house better still. Ever yours, &c. &c.

* This singular mistake did actually happen to a country girl of my acquaintance. I do not venture to put the actor's name,—although surely it was a compliment in its way, not unlike that which Partridge paid to Garrick.

LOST AND WON.

"Nay, but my dear Letty—"

"Don't dear Letty me, Mr. Paul Holton! Have not the East-Woodhay Eleven beaten the Hazelby Eleven for the first time in the

memory of man? and is it not entirely your fault? Answer me that, sir! Did not you insist on taking James White's place, when he got that little knock on the leg with the ball last night, though James, poor fellow, maintained to the last that he could play better with one leg than you with two? Did not you insist on taking poor James's place? and did you get a single notch in either innings? And did not you miss three catches — three fair catches — Mr. Paul Holton? Might not you twice have caught out John Brown, who, as all the world knows, hits up? And did not a ball from the edge of Tom Taylor's bat come into your hands, absolutely into your hands, and did not you let her go? And did not Tom Taylor after that get forty-five runs in that same innings, and thereby win the game? That a man should pretend to play at cricket, and not be able to hold the ball when he has her in his hands! Oh, if I had been there!"

"You! — Why Letty" —

"Don't Letty me, sir! — Don't talk to me! — I am going home!"

"With all my heart, Miss Letitia Dale! — I have the honour, madam, to wish you a good evening." And each turned away at a smart pace, and the one went westward and the other eastward-ho.

This unlover-like parting occurred on Hazelby Down one fine afternoon in the Whitsun-week, between a couple whom all Hazelby and Aberleigh to boot, had, for at least a month before, set down as lovers—Letty Dale, the pretty daughter of the jolly old tanner, and Paul Holton, a rich young yeoman, on a visit in the place. Letty's angry speech will sufficiently explain their mutual provocation, although, to enter fully into her feelings, one must be born in a cricketing parish, and sprung of a cricketing family, and be accustomed to rest that very uncertain and arbitrary standard, the point of honour, on beating our rivals and next neighbours in the annual match —for juxtaposition is a great sharpener of rivalry, as Dr. Johnson knew, when, to please the inhabitants of Plymouth, he abused the good folks who lived at Dock; moreover, one must be also a quick, zealous, ardent, hot-headed, warm-hearted girl, like Letty, a beauty and an heiress, quite unused to disappointment, and not a little in love; and then we shall not wonder, in the first place, that she should be unreasonably angry, or, in the next, that before she had walked half a mile her anger vanished, and was succeeded by tender relentings and earnest wishes for a full and perfect reconciliation. "He'll be sure to call to-morrow morning," thought Letty to herself: "He said he would, before this unlucky cricket-playing. He told me that he had something to say, something particular. I wonder what it can be!" thought poor Letty. "To be sure, he never has said any thing about liking me—but still—and then aunt Judith, and Fanny Wright, and all the neighbours say——However, I shall know to-morrow." And home she tripped to the pleasant house by the tan-yard, as happy as if the East-Woodhay men had not beaten the men of Hazelby. "I shall not see him before to-morrow, though," repeated Letty to herself, and immediately repaired to her pretty flower-garden, the little gate of which opened on a path leading from the Down to the street — a path that, for obvious reasons, Paul was wont to prefer — and began tying up her carnations in the dusk of the evening, and watering her geraniums by the light of the moon, until it was so late that she was fain to return, disappointed, to the house, repeating to herself, "I shall certainly see him to-morrow."

Far different were the feelings of the chidden swain. Well-a-day for the age of chivalry! the happy times of knights and paladins, when a lecture from a lady's rosy lip, or a buffet from her lily hand, would have been received as humbly and as thankfully as the Benedicite from a mitred abbot, or the accolade from a king's sword! Alas for the days of chivalry! They are gone, and I fear me for ever. For certain our present hero was not born to revive them.

Paul Holton was a well-looking and well-educated young farmer, just returned from the north, whither he had been sent for agricultural improvement, and now on the look-out for a farm and a wife, both of which he thought he had found at Hazelby, where he had come on the double errand of visiting some distant relations, and letting two or three small houses recently fallen into his possession. As owner of these houses, all situate in the town, he had claimed a right to join the Hazelby Eleven, mainly induced to avail himself of the privilege by the hope of winning favour in the eyes of the ungrateful fair one, whose animated character, as well as her sparkling beauty, had delighted his fancy, and apparently won his heart, until her rude attack on his play armed all the vanity of man against her attractions. Love is more intimately connected with self-love than people are willing to imagine; and Paul Holton's had been thoroughly mortified. Besides, if his fair mistress's character were somewhat too impetuous, his was greatly over-firm. So he said to himself—"The girl is a pretty girl, but far too much of a shrew for my taming. I am no Petruchio to master this Catharine. 'I come to wive it happily in Padua:' and let her father be as rich as he may, I'll none of her." And, mistaking anger for indifference —no uncommon delusion in a love-quarrel— off he set within the hour, thinking so very much of punishing the saucy beauty, that he entirely forgot the possibility of some of the pain falling to his own share.

The first tidings that Letty heard the next

morning were, that Mr. Paul Holton had departed over-night, having authorised his cousin to let his houses, and to decline the large farm, for which he was in treaty; the next intelligence informed her that he was settled in Sussex; and then his relation left Hazelby—and poor Letty heard no more. Poor Letty! Even in a common parting for a common journey, she who stays behind is the object of pity: how much more so when he who goes—goes never to return, and carries with him the fond affection, the treasured hopes, of a young unpractised heart,

> "And gentle wishes long subdued—
> Subdued and cherish'd long!"

Poor, poor Letty!

Three years passed away, and brought much of change to our country-maiden and to her fortunes. Her father, the jolly old tanner, a kind, frank, thoughtless man, as the cognomen would almost imply, one who did not think that there were such things as wickedness and ingratitude under the sun, became bound for a friend to a large amount; the friend proved a villain, and the jolly tanner was ruined. He and his daughter now lived in a small cottage near their former house; and at the point of time at which I have chosen to resume my story, the old man was endeavouring to persuade Letty, who had never attended a cricket-match since the one which she had so much cause to remember, to accompany him the next day (Whit-Tuesday) to see the Hazelby Eleven again encounter their ancient antagonists, the men of East-Woodhay.

"Pray come, Letty," said the fond father; "I can't go without you; I have no pleasure anywhere without my Letty; and I want to see this match, for Isaac Hunt can't play on account of the death of his mother, and they tell me that the East-Woodhay men have consented to our taking in another mate who practises the new Sussex bowling—I want to see that new-fangled mode. Do come, Letty!" And, with a smothered sigh at the mention of Sussex, Letty consented.

Now old John Dale was not quite ingenuous with his pretty daughter. He did not tell her what he very well knew himself, that the bowler in question was no other than their sometime friend, Paul Holton, whom the business of letting his houses, or some other cause, not, perhaps, clearly defined even to himself, had brought to Hazelby on the eve of the match, and whose new method of bowling (in spite of his former mischances) the Hazelby Eleven were willing to try; the more so as they suspected, what, indeed, actually occurred, that the East-Woodhayites, who would have resisted the innovation of the Sussex system of delivering the ball in the hands of any one else, would have no objection to let Paul Holton, whose bad playing was a standing joke amongst them, do his best or his worst in any way.

Not a word of this did John Dale say to Letty; so that she was quite taken by surprise, when, having placed her father, now very infirm, in a comfortable chair, she sate down by his side on a little hillock of turf, and saw her recreant lover standing amongst a group of cricketers very near, and evidently gazing on her—just as he used to gaze three years before.

Perhaps Letty had never looked so pretty in her life as at that moment. She was simply drest, as became her fallen fortunes. Her complexion was still coloured, like the apple-blossom, with vivid red and white, but there was more of sensibility, more of the heart in its quivering mutability, its alternation of paleness and blushes; the blue eyes were still as bright, but they were oftener cast down; the smile was still as splendid, but far more rare; the girlish gaiety was gone, but it was replaced by womanly sweetness;—sweetness and modesty formed now the chief expression of that lovely face, lovelier, far lovelier, than ever. So apparently thought Paul Holton, for he gazed and gazed with his whole soul in his eyes, in complete oblivion of cricket and cricketer, and the whole world. At last he recollected himself, blushed and bowed, and advanced a few steps, as if to address her; but timid and irresolute, he turned away without speaking, joined the party who had now assembled round the wickets, the umpires called "Play!" and the game began.

East-Woodhay gained the toss and went in, and all eyes were fixed on the Sussex bowler. The ball was placed in his hands; and instantly the wicket was down, and the striker out—no other than Tom Taylor, the boast of his parish, and the best batsman in the county. "Accident! mere accident!" of course, cried East-Woodhay; but another, and another followed: few could stand against the fatal bowling, and none could get notches.—A panic seized the whole side. And then, as losers will, they began to exclaim against the system, called it a toss, a throw, a trick; any thing but bowling, any thing but cricket; railed at it as destroying the grace of the attitude, and the balance of the game; protested against being considered as beaten by such jugglery, and finally, appealed to the umpires as to the fairness of the play. The umpires, men of conscience, and old cricketers, hummed and hawed, and see-sawed; quoted contending precedents and jostling authorities; looked grave and wise, whilst even their little sticks of office seemed vibrating in puzzled importance. Never were judges more sorely perplexed. At last they did as the sages of the bench often do in such cases—reserved the point of law, and desired them to "play out the play." Accordingly the match was resumed; only twenty-seven notches being

gained by the East-Woodhayians in their first innings, and they entirely from the balls of the old Hazelby bowler, James White.

During the quarter of an hour's pause which the laws allow, the victorious man of Sussex went up to John Dale, who had watched him with a strange mixture of feeling, delighted to hear the stumps rattle, and to see opponent after opponent throw down his bat and walk off, and yet much annoyed at the new method by which the object was achieved. "We should not have called this cricket in my day," said he, "and yet it knocks down the wickets gloriously, too." Letty, on her part, had watched the game with unmingled interest and admiration: "He knew how much I liked to see a good cricketer," thought she; yet still, when that identical good cricketer approached, she was seized with such a fit of shyness — call it modesty — that she left her seat and joined a group of young women at some distance.

Paul looked earnestly after her, but remained standing by her father, inquiring with affectionate interest after his health, and talking over the game and the bowling. At length he said, "I hope that I have not driven away Miss Letitia."

"Call her Letty, Mr. Holton," interrupted the old man; "plain Letty. We are poor folks now, and have no right to any other title than our own proper names, old John Dale and his daughter Letty. A good daughter she has been to me," continued the fond father; "for when debts and losses took all that we had—for we paid to the uttermost farthing, Mr. Paul Holton, we owe no man a shilling! — when all my earnings and savings were gone, and the house over our head—the house I was born in, the house she was born in — I loved it the better for that!—taken away from us, then she gave up the few hundreds she was entitled to in right of her blessed mother to purchase an annuity for the old man, whose trust in a villain had brought her to want."

"God bless her!" interrupted Paul Holton.

"Ay, and God will bless her," returned the old man solemnly—"God will bless the dutiful child, who despoiled herself of all to support her old father!"

"Blessings on her dear generous heart!" again ejaculated Paul; "and I was away and knew nothing of this!"

"I knew nothing of it myself until the deed was completed," rejoined John Dale. "She was just of age, and the annuity was purchased and the money paid before she told me; and a cruel kindness it was to strip herself for my sake; it almost broke my heart when I heard the story. But even that was nothing," continued the good tanner, warming with his subject, "compared with her conduct since. If you could but see how she keeps the house, and how she waits upon me; her handiness, her cheerfulness, and all her pretty ways and contrivances to make me forget old times and old places. Poor thing! she must miss her neat parlour and the flower-garden she was so fond of, as much as I do my tan-yard and the great hall; but she never seems to think of them, and never has spoken a hasty word since our misfortunes, for all you know, poor thing! she used to be a little quick-tempered!"

"And I knew nothing of this!" repeated Paul Holton, as, two or three of their best wickets being down, the Hazelby players summoned him to go in. "I knew nothing of all this!"

Again all eyes were fixed on the Sussex cricketer, and at first he seemed likely to verify the predictions and confirm the hopes of the most malicious of his adversaries, by batting as badly as he had bowled well. He had not caught sight of the ball; his hits were weak, his defence insecure, and his mates began to tremble and his opponents to crow. Every hit seemed likely to be the last; he missed a leg ball of Ned Smith's; was all but caught out by Sam Newton; and East-Woodhay triumphed, and Hazelby sat quaking; when a sudden glimpse of Letty, watching him with manifest anxiety, recalled her champion's wandering thoughts. Gathering himself up he stood before the wicket another man; knocked the ball hither and thither, to the turnpike, the coppice, the pond; got three, four, five at a hit; baffled the slow bowler James Smith, and the fast bowler Tom Taylor; got fifty-five notches off his own bat; stood out all the rest of his side; and so handled the adverse party when they went in, that the match was won at a single innings, with six-and-thirty runs to spare.

Whilst his mates were discussing their victory, Paul Holton again approached the father and daughter, and this time she did not run away: "Letty, dear Letty," said he; "three years ago I lost the cricket-match, and you were angry, and I was a fool. But Letty, dear Letty, this match is won; and if you could but know how deeply I have repented, how earnestly I have longed for this day! The world has gone well with me, Letty, for these three long years. I have wanted nothing but the treasure which I myself threw away; and now, if you would but let your father be my father, and my home your home! — if you would but forgive me, Letty!"

Letty's answer is not upon record: but it is certain that Paul Holton walked home from the cricket-ground that evening with old John Dale hanging on one arm, and John Dale's pretty daughter on the other; and that a month after the bells of Hazelby church were ringing merrily in honour of one of the fairest and luckiest matches that ever cricketer lost and won.

CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE.

AMY LLOYD.

One fine sunshiny March morning, a lady, driving herself in a pony-carriage through Aberleigh lane, stopped beside a steep bank to look at a little girl and her dog in the adjoining field. The hedge had been closely cut, except where a tuft of hazel with its long tassels hung over some broom in full flower, and a straggling bush of the white-blossomed sloe was mixed with some branches of palms, from which the bees were already gathering honey. The little girl was almost as busy as the bees: she was gathering violets, white violets and blue, with which the sunny bank was covered; and her little dog was barking at a flock of sheep feeding in that part of the field, for it was a turnip field that was hurdled off for their use. The dog was a small French spaniel, one of the prettiest ever seen, with long curly hair, snow white, except that the ears and three or four spots on the body were yellow; large feathered feet, and bright black eyes: just the sort of dog of which fine ladies love to make pets.

It was curious to see this beautiful little creature, driving before it a great flock of sheep, ewes, lambs, and all — for sheep are sad cowards! And then, when driven to the hurdles, the sheep, cowards though they were, were forced to turn about; how they would take courage at sight of their enemy, advancing a step or two and pretending to look brave; then it was diverting to see how the little spaniel, frightened itself, would draw back barking towards its mistress, almost as sad a coward as the sheep. The lady sat watching their proceedings with great amusement, and at last addressed the little girl, a nice lass of ten years old in deep mourning.

"Whose pretty little dog is that, my dear?" asked the lady.

"Mine, madam," was the answer.

"And where did you get it? The breed is not common."

"It belonged to poor mamma. Poor papa brought it from France." And the look and the tone told at once that poor Amy was an orphan.

"And you and the pretty dog — what's its name?" said the lady, interrupting herself.

"Flossy, ma'am — dear Flossy!" And Amy stooped to stroke the curly, silky, glossy coat which had probably gained Flossy his appellation; and Flossy in return jumped on his young mistress, and danced about her with tenfold glee.

"You and Flossy live hereabout?" inquired the lady.

"Close by, ma'am; at Court farm, with my uncle and aunt Lloyd."

"And you love Flossy?" resumed the lady; "You would not like to part with him?"

"Part with Floss!" cried Amy. "Part with my own Flossy!"—and she flung down her violets, and caught her faithful pet in her arms, as if fearful of its being snatched away; and Floss, as if partaking of the fear, nestled up to his young mistress, and pressed his head against her cheek.

"Do not be alarmed, my dear," replied the lady, preparing to drive on; "I am not going to steal your favourite, but I would give five guineas for a dog like him; and if ever you meet with such a one, you have only to send it to Lumley castle. I am Lady Lumley," added she. "Good morning, love! Farewell, Flossy!" And, with a kind nod, the lady and the pony-chaise passed rapidly by; and Amy and Flossy returned to Court farm.

Amy was an orphan, and had only lately come to live with her good uncle and aunt Lloyd, rough honest country people; and being a shy meek-spirited child, who had just lost her most affectionate parents, and had been used to soft voices and gentle manners, was so frightened at the loud speech of the farmer and the blunt ways of his wife, that she ran away from them as often as she could, and felt as forlorn and desolate as any little girl can do who has early learnt the blessed lesson of reliance on the Father of all. Her chief comfort at Court farm was to pet Flossy and to talk to old Dame Clewer, the charwoman, who had been her own mother's nurse.

Dame Clewer had known better days; but having married late in life, and been soon left a widow, she had toiled early and late to bring up an only son; and all her little earnings had gone to apprentice him to a carpenter and keep him decently clothed; and he, although rather lively and thoughtless, was a dutiful and grateful son, and being now just out of his time, had gone to the next town to try to get work, and hoped to repay his good mother all her care and kindness by supporting her out of his earnings. He had told his mother so when setting off the week before, and she had repeated it with tears in her eyes to Amy — tears of joy; and Amy on her return to the house, went immediately in search of her old friend, whom she knew to be washing there, partly to hear over again the story of Thomas Clewer's goodness, partly to tell her own adventure with Lady Lumley.

In the drying yard, as she expected, Amy found Dame Clewer; not however, as she expected, smiling and busy, and delighted to see Miss Amy, but sitting on the ground by the side of the clothes-basket, her head buried in her hands, and sobbing as if her heart would break. "What could be the matter? Why did she cry so?" asked Amy. And Dame Clewer, unable to resist the kind interest evinced by the affectionate child, told her briefly the cause of her distress — "Thomas had enlisted!" How few words may convey a great sorrow! — "Thomas was gone for a

soldier!"—And the poor mother flung herself at her length on the ground, and gasped and sobbed as though she would never speak again.

"Gone for a soldier!" exclaimed Amy—"Left you! Oh, he never can be so cruel, so wicked! He 'll come back, dear nurse!" (for Amy always called Dame Clewer nurse, as her mother had been used to do.) "He 'll be sure to come back! Thomas is such a good son, with all his wildness. He 'll come back—I know he will."

"He can't!" replied poor nurse, trying to rouse herself from her misery. "He can't come, how much so ever he may wish it; they 'll not let him. Nothing can get him off but money, and I have none to give." And again the mother's tears choked her words. "My poor boy must go!"

"Money!" said Amy, "I have half a crown, that godmamma gave me, and two shillings and three sixpences; I 'll go and fetch them in a moment."

"Blessings on your dear heart!" sobbed Dame Clewer; "your little money would be of no use. The soldier who came to tell me, offered to get him off for five pounds: but where am I to get five pounds? All my goods and all my clothes would not raise near such a sum: and even if any body was willing to lend money to a poor old creature like me, how should I ever be able to pay it? No! Thomas must go—go to the East Indies, as the soldier said, to be killed by the sword or to die of the fever!—I shall never see his dear face again! Never!" And turning resolutely from the pitying child, she bent over the clothes in the basket, trying to unfold them with her trembling hands and to hang them out to dry; but, unable in her agony to separate the wet linen, she burst into a passion of tears, and stood leaning against the clothes'-line, which quivered and vibrated at every sob, as if sensible of the poor mother's misery.

Amy on her part, sat on the steps leading to the house, watching her in silent pity. "Oh, if mamma were alive!" thought the little girl—"or papa! or if I dared ask aunt Lloyd! or if I had the money of my own; or any thing that would fetch the money!" And just as she was thinking this very thought, Floss, wondering to see his little mistress so still and sad, crept up to her, and put his paw in her lap and whined. "Dear Floss!" said Amy unconsciously, and then suddenly remembering what Lady Lumley had said to her, she took the dog up in her arms, and coloured like scarlet, from a mingled emotion of pleasure and pain; for Flossy had been her own mamma's dog, and Amy loved him dearly. For full five minutes she sat hugging Flossy and kissing his sleek shining head, whilst the faithful creature licked her cheeks and her hands, and nestled up to her bosom, and strove all he could to prove his gratitude, and return her caresses. For full five minutes she sat without speaking; at last she went to Dame Clewer, and gave the dog into her arms.

"Lady Lumley offered me five guineas for Flossy this morning," said she; "take him, dear nurse, and take the money; but beg her to be kind to him," continued poor Amy, no longer able to restrain her tears—"beg her to be very kind to my Floss!" And, with a heart too full even to listen to the thanks and blessings which the happy mother was showering upon her head, the little girl turned away.

But did Lady Lumley buy Flossy? And was Thomas Clewer discharged? Yes, Thomas was discharged, for Sir John Lumley spoke to his colonel; and he returned to his home and his fond mother, quite cured of his wildness and his fancy for being a soldier. But Lady Lumley did not buy Floss, because, as she said, however she might like him, she never could bear to deprive so good a girl as Amy of any thing that gave her pleasure. She would not buy Floss, but she continued to take great notice both of him and his little mistress, had them often at the castle, always made Amy a Christmas present, and talks of taking her for her own maid when she grows up.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

THE COBBLER OVER THE WAY.

One of the noisiest inhabitants of the small irregular town* of Cranley, in which I had the honour to be born, was a certain cobbler, by name Jacob Giles. He lived exactly over-right our house, in a little appendage to the baker's shop,—an excrescence from that goodly tenement, which, when the door was closed (for the tiny square window at its side was all but invisible), might, from its shape and its dimensions, be mistaken for an oven or a pig-sty, *ad libitum*. By day, when the half-hatch was open, and the cobbler discovered at work within, his dwelling seemed constructed purposely to hold his figure; as nicely adapted to its size and motions, as the little toy called a weather-house is to the height and functions of the puppets who inhabit it;—only that Jacob Giles's stall was less accommodating than the weather-house, inasmuch as by no chance could his apartment have been made to contain two inmates in any position whatsoever.

At that half-hatch might Jacob Giles be seen stitching and stitching, with the peculiar regular two-handed jerk proper to the art of cobbling, from six in the morning to six at night,—deducting always certain mornings and afternoons and whole days given, when-

*Townlet old Leland would have called it, and truly the word is worth borrowing.

ever his purse or his credit would permit, to the ensnaring seductions of the tap-room at the King's Head. At all other seasons at the half-hatch he might be seen, looking so exactly like a Dutch picture, that I, simple child that I was, took a fine Teniers in my father's possession for a likeness of him. There he sat—with a dirty red night-cap over his grizzled hair, a dingy waistcoat, an old blue coat, darned, patched, and ragged, a greasy leather apron, a pair of crimson plush inexpressibles, worsted stockings of all the colours known in hosiery, and shoes that illustrated the old saying of the shoemaker's wife, by wanting mending more than any shoes in the parish.

The face belonging to this costume was rough and weather-beaten, deeply lined and deeply tinted, of a right copper-colour, with a nose that would have done honour to Bardolph, and a certain indescribable half-tipsy look, even when sober. Nevertheless, the face, ugly and tipsy as it was, had its merits. There was humour in the wink and in the nod, and in the knowing roll with which he transferred the quid of tobacco, his constant recreation and solace, from one cheek to the other; there was good-humour in the half-shut eye, the pursed-up mouth, and the whole jolly visage; and in the countless variety of strange songs and ballads which from morning to night he poured forth from that half-hatch, there was a happy mixture of both. There he sat, in that small den, looking something like a thrush in a goldfinch's cage, and singing with as much power, and far wider range,—albeit his notes were hardly so melodious:—Jobson's songs in the "Devil to Pay," and

"A cobbler there was, and he lived in a stall,
Which served him for parlour, for kitchen, and hall,"

being his favourites.

The half-hatch was, however, incomparably the best place in which to see him, for his face, with all its grotesqueness, was infinitely pleasanter to look at than his figure, one of his legs being shorter than the other, which obliged him to use a crutch, and the use of the crutch having occasioned a protuberance of the shoulder, which very nearly invested him with the dignity of a hump. Little cared he for his lameness! He swung along merrily and rapidly, especially when his steps tended to the alehouse, where he was a man of prime importance, not merely in right of his good songs and his good-fellowship, but in graver moments, as a scholar, and a politician, being the best reader of a newspaper, and the most sagacious commentator on a debate, of any man who frequented the tap, the parish clerk himself not excepted.

Jacob Giles had, as he said, some right to talk about the welfare of old England, having, at one time of his life, been a householder, shopkeeper, and elector (N. B. his visits to the alehouse may account for his descent from the shop to the stall) in the neighbouring borough of D., a place noted for the frequency and virulence of its contested elections. There was no event of his life on which our cobbler piqued himself so much as on having, as he affirmed, assisted in "saving his country," by forming one of the glorious majority of seven, by which a Mr. Brown, of those days, a silent, stupid, respectable country gentleman, a dead vote on one side of the house, ousted a certain Mr. Smith, also a country gentleman, equally silent, stupid, and respectable, and a dead vote on the other side. Which parties in the state these two worthy senators espoused, it was somewhat difficult to gather from the zealous champion of the victorious hero. Local politics have commonly very little to do with any general question: the blues or the yellows, the greens or the reds—colours, not principles, predominate at an election,—which, in this respect, as well as in the ardour of the contest, and the quantity of money risked on the event, bears no small resemblance to a horse-race.

Whatever might have been the party of his favourite candidate, Jacob himself was a Tory of the very first water. His residence at Cranley was during the later days of the French revolution, when Loyalty and Republicanism, Pittite and Foxite divided the land. Jacob Giles was a Tory, a Pittite, a Church-and-King, and Life-and-Fortune man—the loudest of the loyal; held Buonaparte for an incarnation of the evil spirit, and established an Anti-Gallican club at the King's Head, where he got tipsy every Saturday night for the good of the nation. Nothing could exceed the warmth of Jacob's loyalty. He even wanted to join the Cranley volunteers, quoting to the drill-serjeant, who quietly pointed to the crutch and the shoulder, the notable examples of Captain Green who halted, and Lieutenant Jones who was awry, as precedents for his own eligibility. The hump and the limp united were, however, too much to be endured. The man of scarlet declared that there was no such piece of deformity in the whole awkward squad, and Jacob was declared inadmissible;—a personal slight (to say nothing of his being debarred the privilege of shedding his blood in defence of the king and constitution) which our cobbler found so hard to bear, that with the least encouragement in the world from the Opposition of Cranley, he would have ratted. One word of sympathy would have carried Mr. Giles, and his songs and his tipsiness to the "Russel-and-Sidney Club" (Jacobins Jacob used to call them), at the Greyhound; but the Jacobins laughed, and lost their proselyte; the Anti-Gallicans retained Jacob,—and Jacob retained his consistency.

How my friend the cobbler came to be theoretically so violent an Anti-jacobin, is best

known to himself. For certain he was in practice far more of what would in these days be called a radical; was constantly infringing the laws which he esteemed so perfect, and bringing into contempt the authorities for which he professed such enthusiastic veneration. Drunk or sober, in his own quarrels, or in the quarrels of others, he waged a perpetual war with justice; hath been seen to snap his finger at an order of sessions, the said order having for object the removal of a certain barrel-organ man, "his ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;" and got into a *demelé* with the church in the person of the old sexton, whom he nearly knocked down with the wind of his crutch (N. B. Jacob took care not to touch the old man) for driving away his clients, the boys who were playing at marbles on the tomb-stones. Besides these skirmishes, he was in a state of constant hostility with the officials called constables; and had not his reputation, good or bad, stood him in stead, his Saturday-night's exploits would have brought him acquainted with half the roundhouses, bridewells, stocks, and whipping-posts in the county. His demerits brought him off. "It's only that merry rogue, Jacob!" said the lenient: "only that sad dog, the cobbler!" cried the severe: and between these contrary epithets, which in Master Giles's case bore so exactly the same meaning, the poor cobbler escaped.

In good truth it would have been a pity if Jacob's hebdomadal deviations from the straight path had brought him into any serious scrape, for, tipsy or sober, a better-natured creature never lived. Poor as he was, he had always something for those poorer than himself; would share his scanty dinner with a starving beggar, and his last quid of tobacco with a crippled sailor. The children came to him for nuts and apples, for comical stories and droll songs; the very curs of the street knew that they had a friend in the poor cobbler. He even gave away his labour and his time. Many a shoe hath he heeled with a certainty that the wretched pauper could not pay him; and many a job, extra-official, hath he turned his hand to, with no expectation of fee or reward. The "Cobbler over the way" was the constant resource of every body in want of a help, and whatever the station or circumstances of the person needing him, his services might be depended on to the best of his power.

For my own part, I can recollect Jacob Giles as long as I can recollect any thing. He made the shoes for my first doll—(pink I remember they were)—a doll called Sophy, who had the misfortune to break her neck by a fall from the nursery window; Jacob Giles made her pink slippers, and mended all the shoes of the family, with whom he was a universal favourite. My father delighted in his statesmanship, which must have been very entertaining; my mother in his benevolence; and I in his fun. He used to mimic Punch for my amusement; and I once greatly affronted the real Punch, by preferring the cobbler's performance of the closing scenes. Jacob was a general favourite in our family; and one member of it was no small favourite of Jacob's: that person was neither more nor less than my nursery-maid, Nancy Dawson.

Nancy Dawson was the daughter of a farmer in the neighbourhood, a lively, clever girl, more like a French *soubrette* than an English maid-servant, *gentille* and *espiègle*; not a regular beauty,—hardly perhaps pretty; but with bright laughing eyes, a ready smile, a pleasant speech, and altogether as dangerous a person for an opposite neighbour as an old bachelor could desire. Jacob became seriously enamoured; wasted half his mornings in watching our windows, for my nursery looked out upon the street; and limped after us every afternoon when she took me (a small damsel of three years old, or thereabout) out walking. He even left off his tobacco, his worsted night-cap, his tipsiness, and his Saturday-night's club; got a whole coat to his back, set a patch on his shoe, and talked of taking a shop and settling in life. This, however, was nothing wonderful. Nancy's charms might have fired a colder heart than beat in the bosom of Jacob Giles. But that Nancy should "abase her eyes" on him: there was the marvel. Nancy! who had refused Peter Green the grocer, and John Keep the butcher, and Sir Henry's smart gamekeeper, and our own tall footman! Nancy to think of a tippling cripple like the cobbler over the way,—that was something to wonder at!

Nancy, when challenged on the subject, neither denied nor assented to the accusation. She answered very demurely that her young lady liked Mr. Giles, that he made the child laugh, and was handy with her, and was a careful person to leave her with if she had to go on an errand for her mistress or the housekeeper. So Jacob continued our walking footman.

Our walks were all in one direction. About a mile south of Cranley was a large and beautiful coppice, at one corner of which stood the cottage of the woodman, a fine young man, William Cotton by name, whose sister Mary was employed by my mother as a sempstress. The wood, the cottage, and the cottage garden, were separated by a thick hedge and wide ditch from a wild broken common covered with sheep—a common full of turfy knolls and thymy banks, where the heath-flower and the harebell blew profusely, and where the sun poured forth a flood of glory on the golden-blossomed broom. To one corner of this common,—a sunny nook covered with little turfy hillocks, originally, I suppose, formed by the moles, but which I used to call

Cock-Robins' graves,—Nancy generally led; and there she would frequently, almost constantly, leave me under Jacob's protection whilst she jumped over a stile inaccessible to my little feet, sometimes to take a message to Mary Cotton, sometimes to get me flowers from the wood, sometimes for blackberries, sometimes for nuts,—but always on some ostensible and well-sounding errand.

Nancy's absences, however, became longer and longer; and one evening Jacob and I grew mutually fidgety. He had told his drollest stories, made his most comical faces, and played Punch twice over to divert me; but I was tired and cross; it was getting late in the autumn; the weather was cold; the sun had gone down; and I began to cry amain for home and for papa. Jacob, much distressed by my plight, partly to satisfy me, and partly to allay his own irritability, deposited me in the warmest nook he could find, and scrambled over the stile in search of Nancy. Voices in the wood — her voice and William's guided him to the spot where she and the young forester sate side by side at the foot of an oak tree; and, unseen by the happy couple, the poor cobbler overheard the following dialogue.

"On Saturday then, Nancy, I may give in the banns. You are sure that your mistress will let your sister take your place till she is suited?"

"Quite sure," rejoined Nancy; "she is so kind."

"And on Monday fortnight the wedding is to be. Remember, not an hour later than eight o'clock on Monday fortnight. Consider how long I have waited—almost half a year."

"Well!" said Nancy, "at eight o'clock on Monday fortnight."

"And the cobbler!" cried William; "that excellent under-nurse, who is waiting so contentedly on our little lady at the other side of the hedge"—

"Ah, the poor cobbler!" interrupted Nancy.

"We'll ask him to the wedding-dinner," added William.

"Yes; the poor cobbler!" continued the saucy maiden; "my old lover, the 'Cobbler over the way,' we'll certainly ask him to the wedding-dinner. It will comfort him."

And to the wedding-dinner the cobbler went; and he was comforted:—he kissed the pretty bride; he shook hands with the handsome bridegroom, resumed his red cap and his tobacco, got tipsy to his heart's content, and reeled home singing 'God save the king,' right happy to find himself still a bachelor.

PATTY'S NEW HAT.

Wandering about the meadows one morning last May, absorbed in the pastoral beauty of the season and the scenery, I was overtaken by a heavy shower just as I passed old Mrs. Matthews's great farm-house, and forced to run for shelter to her hospitable porch. A pleasant shelter in good truth I found there. The green pastures dotted with fine old trees stretching all around; the clear brook winding about them turning and returning on its course, as if loath to depart; the rude cart-track leading through the ford; the neater pathway with its foot-bridge; the village spire rising amongst a cluster of cottages, all but the roofs and chimneys concealed by a grove of oaks; the woody back-ground, and the blue hills in the distance, all so flowery and bowery in the pleasant month of May; the nightingales singing; the bells ringing; and the porch itself, around which a honeysuckle in full bloom was wreathing its sweet flowers, giving out such an odour in the rain, as in dry weather nothing but the twilight will bring forth — an atmosphere of fragrance. The whole porch was alive and musical with bees, who, happy rogues, instead of being routed by the wet, only folded their wings the closer, and dived the deeper into the honey-tubes, enjoying, as it seemed, so good an excuse for creeping still farther within their flowery lodgment. It is hard to say which enjoyed the sweet breath of the shower and the honeysuckle most, the bees or I; but the rain began to drive so fast, that at the end of five minutes I was not sorry to be discovered by a little girl belonging to the family; and, first, ushered into the spacious kitchen, with its heavy oak table, its curtained chimney-corner, its bacon-rack loaded with enormous flitches, and its ample dresser, glittering with crockery-ware; and, finally, conducted by Mrs. Matthews herself into her own comfortable parlour, and snugly settled there with herself and her eldest grand-daughter, a woman grown; whilst the younger sister, a smiling light-footed lass of eleven or thereabouts, tripped off to find a boy to convey a message to my family, requesting them to send for me, the rain being now too decided to admit of any prospect of my walking home.

The sort of bustle which my reception had caused having subsided, I found great amusement in watching my hospitable hostess, and listening to a dialogue, if so it may be called, between her pretty grand-daughter and herself, which at once let me into a little love-secret, and gave me an opportunity of observing one, of whose occasional oddities I had all my life heard a great deal.

Mrs. Matthews was one of the most remarkable persons in these parts; a capital farmer, a most intelligent parish officer, and in her domestic government, not a little resembling one of the finest sketches which Mr. Crabbe's graphical pen ever produced.

"Next died the widow Goe, an active dame
Famed ten miles round and worthy all her fame;
She lost her husband when their loves were young,
But kept her farm, her credit, and her tongue:

Full thirty years she ruled with matchless skill,
With guiding judgment and resistless will;
Advice she scorned, rebellions she suppressed,
And sons and servants bowed at her behest
No parish business in the place could stir
Without direction or assent from her;
In turn she took each office as it fell,
Knew all their duties and discharged them well.
She matched both sons and daughters to her mind,
And lent them eyes, for love she heard was blind."
Parish Register.

Great power of body and mind was visible in her robust person and massive countenance; and there was both humour and intelligence in her acute smile, and in the keen grey eye that glanced from under her spectacles. All that she said bore the stamp of sense; but at this time she was in no talking mood, and on my begging that I might cause no interruption, resumed her seat and her labours in silent composure. She sat at a little table mending a fustian jacket belonging to one of her sons —a sort of masculine job which suited her much better than a more delicate piece of sempstress-ship would probably have done; indeed the tailors' needle, which she brandished with great skill, the whity-brown thread tied round her neck, and the huge dull-looking *shears* (one can't make up one's mind to call such a machine scissors), which in company with an enormous pincushion dangled from her apron-string, figuring as the pendant to a most formidable bunch of keys, formed altogether such a working apparatus as shall hardly be matched in these days of polished cutlery and cobwebby cotton-thread.

On the other side of the little table sat her pretty grand-daughter Patty, a black-eyed young woman, with a bright complexion, a neat trim figure, and a general air of gentility considerably above her station. She was trimming a very smart straw hat with pink ribbons; trimming and untrimming, for the bows were tied and untied, taken off and put on, and taken off again, with a look of impatience and discontent, not common to a damsel of seventeen when contemplating a new piece of finery. The poor little lass was evidently out of sorts. She sighed, and quirked, and fidgeted, and seemed ready to cry; whilst her grandmother just glanced at her from under her spectacles, pursed up her mouth, and contrived with some difficulty not to laugh. At last Patty spoke.

"Now, grandmother, you will let me go to Chapel-Row revel this afternoon, won't you?"

"Humph!" said Mrs. Matthews.

"It hardly rains at all, grandmother!"

"Humph!" again said Mrs. Matthews, opening the prodigious scissors with which she was amputating, so to say, a button, and directing the rounded end significantly to my wet shawl, whilst the sharp point was reverted towards the dripping honeysuckle. "Humph!"

"There's no dirt to signify!"

Another "Humph!" and another point to the draggled tail of my white gown.

"At all events, it's going to clear."

Two "Humphs!" and two points, one to the clouds, and one to the barometer.

"It's only seven miles," said Patty; "and if the horses are wanted, I can walk."

"Humph!" quoth Mrs. Matthews.

"My aunt Ellis will be there, and my cousin Mary."

"Humph!" again said Mrs. Matthews.

"And if a person is coming here on business, what can I be wanted for when you are at home, grandmother?"

"Humph!" once again was the answer.

"What business can any one have with me?"

Another "Humph!"

"My cousin Mary will be so disappointed!"

"Humph!"

"And I half promised my cousin William —poor William!"

"Humph!" again.

"Poor William! Oh, grandmother, do let me go! And I've got my new hat and all—just such a hat as William likes! Poor William! You will let me go, grandmother?"

And receiving no answer but a very unequivocal "Humph!" poor Patty threw down her straw hat, fetched a deep sigh, and sate in a most disconsolate attitude, snipping her pink ribbon to pieces; Mrs. Matthews went on manfully with her "stitchery;" and for ten minutes there was a dead pause. It was at length broken by my little friend and introducer, Susan, who was standing at the window, and exclaimed—"Who is this riding up the meadow all through the rain? Look!—see!—I do think—no, it can't be—yes, it is —it is certainly my cousin William Ellis! Look, grandmother!"

"Humph!" said Mrs. Matthews.

"What can cousin William be coming for?" continued Susan.

"Humph!" quoth Mrs. Matthews.

"Oh, I know!—I know!" screamed Susan, clapping her hands and jumping for joy as she saw the changed expression of Patty's countenance,—the beaming delight, succeeded by a pretty downcast shamefacedness, as she turned away from her grandmother's arch smile and archer nod. "I know!—I know!" shouted Susan.

"Humph?" said Mrs. Matthews.

"For shame, Susan! Pray don't, grandmother!" said Patty, imploringly.

"For shame! Why I did not say he was coming to court Patty! Did I, grandmother?" returned Susan.

"And I take this good lady to witness," replied Mrs. Matthews, as Patty, gathering up her hat and her scraps of ribbon, prepared to make her escape—"I take you all to wit-

ness that I have said nothing of any sort. Get along with you, Patty!" added she, "you have spoiled your pink trimming; but I think you are likely to want white ribbons next, and, if you put me in mind, I'll buy them for you!" And, smiling in spite of herself, the happy girl ran out of the room.

CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE.

THE MAGPIES.

"Come along, girls! Helen! Caroline! I say don't stand jabbering there upon the stairs, but come down this instant, or Dash and I will be off without you."

This elegant speech was shouted from the bottom of the great staircase at Dinely-Hall, by young George Dinely, an Etonian of eleven years old, just come home for the holidays, to his two younger sisters who stood disputing very ardently in French at the top. The cause of contention was, to say the truth, no greater an object than the colour of a work-bag, which they were about to make for their mamma: slate lined with pink being the choice of Miss Caroline, whilst Miss Helen preferred drab with a blue lining.

"Don't stand quarrelling there about the colour of your trumpery," added George, "but come along!"

Now George would have scorned to know a syllable of any language except Latin and Greek, but neither of the young ladies being Frenchwoman enough to construe the appellation of the leading article, the words "drab" and "slate," which came forth in native English pretty frequently, as well as the silk dangling in their hands, had enlightened him as to the matter in dispute.

George was a true schoolboy, rough and kind; affecting perhaps more roughness than naturally belonged to him, from a mistaken notion that it made him look bold, and English, and manly. There cannot be a greater mistake, since the boldest man is commonly the mildest, thus realizing in every way the expression of Shakspeare, which has been the subject of a somewhat unnecessary commentary, "He's gentle and not fearful." For the rest our hero loved his sisters, which was very right; and loved to teaze them, which was very wrong; and now he and his dog Dash, both wild with spirits and with happiness, were waiting most impatiently to go down to the village on a visit to old Nurse Simmons and her magpie.

Nurse Simmons was a very good and very cross old woman, who after ruling in the nursery of Dinely-Hall for two generations, scolding and spoiling Sir Edward and his brothers, and performing thirty years afterwards the same good office for Master George and his sisters, had lately abdicated her throne on the arrival of a French governess, and was now comfortably settled at a cottage of her own in the village street.

George Dinely and Dash had already that morning visited George's own pony, and his father's brood mares, the garden, the stables, the pheasantry, the green-house and the farm-yard; had seen a brood of curious bantams, two litters of pigs, and a family of greyhound puppies, and had few friends, old or new, left to visit except Nurse Simmons, her cottage and her magpie, a bird of such accomplishments, that his sisters had even made it the subject of a letter to Eton. The magpie might perhaps claim an equal share with his mistress in George's impatience; and Dash, always eager to get out of doors, seemed nearly as fidgety as his young master.

Dash was as beautiful a dog as one should see in a summer's day; one of the large old English spaniels, which are now so rare, with a superb head like those that you see in Spanish pictures, and such ears! they more than met over his pretty spotted nose, and when he lapped his milk dipped into the pan at least two inches. His hair was long and shiny and wavy, not curly, partly of a rich dark liver colour, partly of a silvery white, and beautifully feathered about the legs and thighs. Every body used to wonder that Dash, who apparently ate so little, should be in such good case; but the marvel was by no means so great as it seemed, for his being George's peculiar pet and property did not hinder his being the universal favourite of the whole house, from the drawing-room to the kitchen. Not a creature could resist Dash's silent supplications at meal-times, when he sat upon his haunches looking amiable, with his large ears brought into their most becoming position, his head a little on one side, and his beautiful eyes fixed on your face, with as near an approach to speech as ever eyes made in the world. From Sir Edward and her Ladyship down to the stable-boy and the kitchen-maid, no inhabitant of Dinely-Hall could resist Dash! So that being a dog of most apprehensive sagacity with regard to the hours appropriated to the several refections of the family, he usually contrived, between the dining parlour, the school-room, and the servants' hall, to partake of three breakfasts and as many dinners every day, to say nothing of an occasional snap at luncheon or supper-time. No wonder that Dash was in high condition. His good plight, however, had by no means impaired his activity. On the contrary, he was extremely lively as well as intelligent, and had a sort of circular motion, a way of flinging himself quite round on his hind feet, something after the fashion in which the French dancers twirl themselves round on one leg, which not only showed unusual agility in a dog of his size, but gave token of the same

spirit and animation which sparkled in his bright hazel eye. Any thing of eagerness or impatience was sure to excite this motion, and George Dinely gravely assured his sisters, when they at length joined him in the hall, that Dash had flung himself round six-and-twenty times whilst waiting the conclusion of their quarrel.

Getting out into the lawn and the open air, did not tend to diminish Dash's glee or his capers, and the young party walked merrily on; George telling of school pranks and school misfortunes — the having lost or spoilt four hats since Easter seemed rather to belong to the first class of adventures than the second, — his sisters listening dutifully and wonderingly; and Dash following his own devices, now turning up a mouse's nest from a water furrow in the park, — now springing a covey of young partridges in a corn-field, — now plunging his whole hairy person in the brook, — and now splashing Miss Helen from head to foot by ungallantly jumping over her whilst crossing a stile, being thereunto prompted by a whistle from his young master, who had with equal want of gallantry, leapt the stile first himself, and left his sisters to get over as they could; until at last the whole party, having passed the stile, and crossed the bridge, and turned the Church-yard corner, found themselves in the shady recesses of the Vicarage-lane, and in full view of the vine-covered cottage of Nurse Simmons.

As they advanced they heard a prodigious chattering and jabbering, and soon got near enough to ascertain that the sound proceeded mainly from one of the parties they were come to visit—Nurse Simmons's magpie. He was perched in the middle of the road, defending a long dirty bare bone of mutton, doubtless his property, on one end of which he stood, whilst the other extremity was occupied by a wild bird of the same species, who, between pecking at the bone, and fighting, and scolding, found full employment. The wild magpie was a beautiful creature, as wild magpies are, of a snowy white and a fine blue black, perfect in shape and plumage, and so superior in appearance to the tame bird, ragged, draggled and dirty, that they hardly seemed of the same kind. Both were chattering away most furiously; the one in his natural and unintelligible gibberish, the other partly in his native tongue, and partly in that, for his skill in which he was so eminent,—thus turning his accomplishments to an unexpected account, and larding his own lean speech with divers foreign garnishes, such as "What's-o'clock?" and "How do you do!" and "Very well I thank you," and "Poor pretty Mag!" and "Mag's a good bird,"—all delivered in the most vehement accent, and all doubtless understood by the unlearned adversary as terms of reproach.

"What can those two magpies be quarreling about?" said Caroline, as soon as she could speak for laughing; for on the children's approach the birds had abandoned the mutton bone, which had been quietly borne away by Dash, who in spite of his usual sumptuous fare had no objection to such a windfall, and was lying in great state on a mossy bank, discussing and enjoying the stolen morsel.

"What a fury they are in! I wish I knew what they were saying," pursued Caroline, as the squabble grew every moment more angry and less intelligible.

"They are talking nonsense, doubtless, as people commonly do when they quarrel," quoth George, "and act wisely to clothe it in a foreign tongue; perhaps they may be disputing about colours."

"What an odd noise it is!" continued Caroline, by no means disposed to acknowledge her brother's compliment; "I never heard any thing like it."

"I have," said George, drily.

"I wonder whether they comprehend each other!" ejaculated Miss Helen, following her sister's example, and taking no notice of the provoking George; "they really do seem to understand."

"As well as other magpies," observed the young gentleman, "why should they not?"

"But what strange gibberish!" added poor Helen.

"Gibberish, Miss Helen! Don't you hear that the birds are sputtering magpie French, sprinkled with a little magpie English? I was just going to ask you to explain it to me," replied the unmerciful George. "It is quite a parody upon your work-bag squabble," pursued their tormentor; "only that the birds are the wiser, for I see they are parting,—the wild one flying away, the tame gentleman hopping towards us. Quite the scene of the work-bag over again," continued George, "only with less noise, and much shortened—an abridged and corrected edition! Really, young ladies, the magpies have the best of it," said the Etonian, and off he stalked into Nurse Simmons's Cottage.

COTTAGE NAMES.

'Why Lonicera wilt thou name thy child?'
I ask'd the gard'ner's wife in accents mild.
'We have a right,' replied the sturdy dame,
And Lonicera was the infant's name. CRABBE.

'A commodity of good names." SHAKSPEARE.

FROM the time of Goldsmith down to the present day, fine names have been the ridicule of comic authors and the aversion of sensible people, notwithstanding which the evil has increased almost in proportion to its reprobation. Miss Clementina Wilhelmina Stubbs was but a type of the Julias, the Isabels, and

the Helens of this accomplished age. I should not, however, so much mind if this folly were comprised in that domain of cold gentility, to which affectation usually confines itself. One does not regard seeing Miss Arabella seated at the piano, or her little sister Leonora tottling across the carpet to show her new pink shoes. That is in the usual course of events. But the fashion spreads deeper and wider; the village is infected and the village green; Amelias and Claras sweep your rooms and cook your dinners, gentle Sophias milk your cows, and if you ask a pretty smiling girl at a cottage door to tell you her name, the rosy lips lisp out Caroline.* It was but the other day that I went into a neighbour's to procure a messenger, and found the errand disputed by a gentle Georgina without a shoe, and a fair Augusta with half a frock. Now this is a sad thing. One looks upon cottage names as a part of cottage furniture, of the costume, and is as much discomposed by the change as a painter of interiors would be who should find a Grecian couch instead of an oaken settle by the wide open hearth. In fine houses fine names do not signify; though I would humbly suggest to godfathers and godmothers, papas, mammas, maiden aunts, nurses, and gossips in general, the unconscious injury that they are doing to novelists, poets, dramatic writers, and the whole fraternity of authors, by trespassing on their (nominal) property, infringing their patent, encroaching on their privilege, underselling their stock in trade, depreciating their currency, and finally robbing poor heroes and heroines of their solitary possession, the only thing they can call their own. Shakspeare has an admonition much to the purpose, 'he who filches from me my *good name*,' and so forth. Did they never hear *that?* never see Othello? never read Elegant Extracts? never learn the speech by rote out of Enfield's Speaker? If they did, I must say the lesson has been as completely thrown away as lessons of morality commonly are. Sponsors in these days think no more harm of 'filching a name' than a sparrow does of robbing a cherry-tree.

This, however, is an affair of conscience or of taste, and conscience and taste are delicate points to meddle with, especially the latter. People will please their fancies, and every lady has her favourite names. I myself have several, and they are mostly short and simple. Jane, that queenly name! Jane Seymour, Jane Grey, 'the noble Jane de Montford;'—Anne, to which lady seems to belong as of right,—a late celebrated Scottish duke is said to have caused an illegitimate daughter to be so baptized, Lady-Anne, and my friend Allan Cunningham's beautiful ballad has joined the name and the title still more inseparably;—Mary, which is as common as a white violet, and like that has something indestructibly sweet and simple, and fit for all wear, high or low, suits the cottage or the palace, the garden or the field, the pretty or the ugly, the old or the young;—Margaret, Marguerite—the pearl! the daisy! Oh name of romance and of minstrelsy, which brings the days of chivalry to mind, and the worship of flowers and of ladies fair! —Emily, in which all womanly sweetness seems bound up—perhaps this is the effect of the association of ideas*—I know so many charming Emilys;—and Susan, the sprightly, the gentle, the home-loving, the kind;—association again! But certainly there are some names which seem to belong to particular classes of character, to form the mind and even to influence the destiny: Louisa, now;—is not your Louisa necessarily a die-away damsel, who reads novels, and holds her head on one side, languishing and given to love? Is not Lucy a pretty *soubrette*, a wearer of cast gowns and cast smiles, smart and coquettish? Must not Emma, as a matter of course, prove epistolary, if only for the sake of her signature? And is there not great danger that Laura may go a step farther, write poetry and publish? Oh beware, dear godmammas, when you call an innocent baby after Petrarch's muse! Think of the peril! Beware.

Next to names simple in themselves, those which fall easily into diminutives seem to be most desirable. All abbreviations are pretty —Lizzy, Bessy, Sophy, Fanny—the prettiest of all! There is something so familiar, so homelike, so affectionate in the sound,—it seems to tell in one short word a story of family love, to vouch for the amiableness of both parties. I never thought one of the most brilliant and elegant women in England quite so charming as she really is, till I heard her call her younger sister 'Annie.' It seemed to remove at once the almost repellant quality which belongs to extreme polish,—gave a genial warmth to her brightness, became her like a smile. There was a tenderness in the voice too, a delay, a dwelling on the double consonant, giving to English something of the charm of Italian pronunciation, which I have noticed only in two persons, who are, I think, the most graceful speakers and readers of my acquaintance. 'Annie!' If she had called her sister Anna-Maria according to the register, I should have admired, and feared, and shunned her to my dying day. That little word

* A great number of children, amongst the lower orders, are Carolines. That does not, however, wholly proceed from a love of the appellation; though I believe that a queen Margery or a queen Sarah would have had fewer namesakes. A clergyman in my neighbourhood used to mistake the sound, and christen the babies Catharine;—a wise error, for Kate is a noble abbreviation.

* There is another association which cannot be forgotten in speaking of Emily. It belongs to Palamon and Arcite, that most fortunate of stories, which comes to us consecrated by the genius of Chaucer and of Dryden, of Fletcher and of Shakspeare.

made us friends immediately. I like manly abbreviations too,—who does not?—they say so much for character. You may know what one man thinks of another by his manner of calling him. Thomas and James and Richard and William are stupid young gentlemen; Tom and Jem and Dick and Will are fine spirited fellows. Henry now, what a soft swain your Henry is! the proper theme of gentle poesy; a name to fall in love withal; devoted at the font to song and sonnet, and the tender passion; a baptized inamorato; a christened hero. Call him Harry, and see how you ameliorate his condition. The man is free again, turned out of song and sonnet and romance, and young ladies' hearts. Shakspeare understood this well, when he wrote of prince Hal and Harry Hotspur. To have called them Henry would have spoiled both characters. George and Charles are unlucky in this respect; they have no diminutives, and what mouthfuls of monosyllables they are! names royal too, and therefore unshortened. A king must be of a very rare class who could afford to be called by shorthand;—very popular to tempt the rogues, well-conditioned to endure it, wise and strong to afford it. Our Harry the Fifth, the conqueror of Azincourt, might and did; and the French Henri Quatre; and now and then a usurper. Niccola Rienzi, Oliver Cromwell, and Napoleon, the noblest of names, have all undergone such transformation; and indeed the Roman tribune, the least known but not perhaps the least remarkable of the three; he who, born of an innkeeper and a washerwoman, restored for a while the free republic of Rome; the friend of Petrarch, the arbiter of princes, the summoner of emperors, the arraigner of popes—is scarcely known even in the grave page of history by any other appellation than that of Cola Rienzi—as who should say *Nick*.

I have said that names sometimes form the character. Sometimes, on the other hand, they are like dreams, and become true by contraries; especially if you christen after the virtues. Thus the wildest flirt of my acquaintance happens to be a Miss Prudentia—a second sister, too, whose elder is not likely to marry, so that the misnomer is palpable; and the greatest scold I ever encountered, the errantest virago, was a Mrs. Patience. The Graces are usually awkward gawkies, and the Belles all through the alphabet, from Annabelle downward, are a generation of frights. The Floras are sure to be pale puny girls, and the Roses are apt to wither on the virgin stalk. Call a boy after some distinguished character, and the contradiction grows still more glaring. Your Foxes and Hampdens and Sidneys range themselves on the ministerial benches, your Pitts and Melvilles turn out rank radicals, your Andrew Marvels take bribes, and your Nelsons run away. There is a fatality in those christian sirnames, those baptized heathens; they are sure never to fit, never run well with other names. In the case of females especially there is a double danger; even if they seem to mark evenly at first, see how they end. The most remarkable instance of this acquired incongruity I ever knew befell a fair Highlander, one of my schoolfellows. Her mother, claiming to be sprung from the Bruce family, would call her daughter after the good king Robert, and nothing could be better matched than her two noble Scottish names, Bruce Campbell; they suited her like her tartan dress. She was a tall, graceful blue-eyed girl, with high spirits and some pride, an air compounded of the palace and the mountain, a sort of wild royalty, and a step that puzzled alike our French dancing-master and our English drill-serjeant,—it was so unlike what either of them taught, so un-French, so un-English, and yet so bounding and free. She left school, and for some years I heard nothing more of her than that she was happily married. Last summer I had the pleasure of meeting a cousin of hers (as near I should think as within the eighth degree), and began immediately to inquire for my fair friend. "I understand," said I, "that she married early and well?"—"Yes, very," was the reply; "but she had the misfortune to lose Mr. Smith in the second year of their nuptials. She is now, however, re-married to a Mr. Brown."—I heard no more! I was petrified. Bruce Smith! Imagine such a conjunction! And now Bruce Brown! fancy that! There is an "apt alliteration" for you! And even if she should take refuge in initials, think of B. B.! "P. P., clerk of this parish," has the advantage both in look and sound. Oh, your proper names are dangerous! It is the practice of the Americans, and with them it may perhaps be politic and patriotic to diffuse and perpetuate the memory of their Washingtons and Jeffersons among the descendants of the people whom they freed, to give the new generation a sort of personal interest in their fame. But why should we adopt the fashion? And why should it spread? as spread it does. Those papas and mammas, who labour under the misfortune of a plebeian sirname, do the best to lighten the calamity to their offspring by an harmonious and dignified *prænomen*, sometimes taken from friends or acquaintance chosen as sponsors for the good gift of a seemly appellation; sometimes culled from history; sometimes from that pseudo-history called a novel; sometimes from the peerage; sometimes from the racing calendar, which, by the by, does not fail to return the compliment. One ingenious gentleman, in a northern county, even christened his eldest hope after the village in which he was born,—Allonby of Allonby!—How well it looks! and what a pity that the wretched little word "Short" should have a right to in-

trude! Allonby Short; "oh what a falling off was there!"—If the son should have half his father's genius, he will get an act of parliament, and discard it altogether.

The prefixing of a little miserable name to another of the same class is also exceedingly fashionable amongst our *parvenus*. They seem to think that in names, as in figures, value increases tenfold by the addition of a cipher. Hence the unnatural and portentous union of hideous monosyllables on name-tickets and door-plates, where two "low words oft creep in one dull line." Hence your White Sharps, your Ford Greens, your Hall Gills, and other appellations of the same *calibre*, which stare you in the face go where you will, and are clung to with a jealous tenacity of which the Percies and Howards and Cavendishes (for whom one name is enough) never dream. Hence all varieties in spelling, devices to turn the vulgar to the genteel by the mere change of a letter:* hence the De's and the Fitz's, by which good common English is transmogrified into bad French, to be mispronounced by the ignorant and laughed at by the wise,—the deserved and inevitable fate of pretension, ridiculous in every thing, and most of all in cottage names.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE SHAW.

Sept. 9th,—A bright sunshiny afternoon. What a comfort it is to get out again—to see once more that rarity of rarities, a fine day! We English people are accused of talking over-much of the weather; but the weather, this summer, has forced people to talk of it. Summer! did I say? Oh! season most unworthy of that sweet, sunny name! Season of coldness and cloudiness, of gloom and rain! A worse November!—for in November the days are short; and shut up in a warm room, lighted by that household sun, a lamp, one feels through the long evenings comfortably independent of the out-of-door tempests. But though we may have, and did have, fires all through the dog-days, there is no shutting out day-light; and sixteen hours of rain, pattering against the windows and dripping from the eaves—sixteen hours of rain, not merely audible but visible, for seven days in the week—would be enough to exhaust the patience of Job or Grizzel; especially if Job were a farmer, and Grizzel a country gentlewoman. Never was known such a season! Hay swimming, cattle drowning, fruit rotting, corn spoiling! and that naughty river the Loddon, who never can take Puff's advice, and "keep between its banks," running about the country, fields, roads, gardens and houses, like mad! The weather would be talked of. Indeed, it was not easy to talk of any thing else. A friend of mine having occasion to write me a letter, thought it worth abusing in rhyme, and bepommelled it through three pages of Bath-Guide verse; of which I subjoin a specimen:—

"Aquarius surely *reigns* over the world,
And of late he his water-pot strangely has twirled;
Or he's taken a cullender up by mistake,
And unceasingly dips it in some mighty lake;
Though it is not in Lethe—for who can forget
The annoyance of getting most thoroughly wet?
It must be in the river called Styx, I declare,
For the moment it drizzles it makes the men swear.
'It did rain to-morrow," is growing good grammar;
Vauxhall and camp-stools have been brought to the hammer;
A pony-gondola is all I can keep,
And I use my umbrella and pattens in sleep:
Row out of my window, whene'er 'tis my whim
To visit a friend, and just ask 'Can you swim?"

So far my friend.† In short, whether in prose or in verse, every body railed at the weather. But this is over now. The sun has come to dry the world; mud is turned into dust; rivers have retreated to their proper limits; farmers have left off grumbling; and we are about to take a walk, as usual, as far as the Shaw, a pretty wood about a mile off. But one of our companions being a stranger to the gentle reader, we must do him the honour of an introduction.

Dogs, when they are sure of having their own way, have sometimes ways as odd as

* It is a pity that the hero of Mr. Lamb's excellent farce, "Mr. H." did not possess a little of this sort of ingenuity. I am convinced that the addition or omission of a few letters, or even the transposition, the making an anagram of the word, or some such quip or quiddity, would have converted "Hog's-flesh" into a very respectable appellation. Did not Miss Hannah K. for instance, make herself at once genteel and happy by merely striking out the first letter and the last—vile useless aspirates? And did not Martha D. become a fashionable lady at a stroke by one bold *erratum*, "for Martha read Matilda" in the first leaf of that domestic register the family Bible? There is nothing so ingenious under the sun as your genuine name-coiner! A forger by profession is less dexterous, a coat-of-arms maker less imaginative. It is the very triumph of invention.

† This friend of mine is a person of great quickness and talent, who, if she were not a beauty and a woman of fortune—that is to say, if she were prompted by either of those two powerful *stimuli*, want of money or want of admiration, to take due pains,—would inevitably become a clever writer. As it is, her notes and *jeux d'esprit*, struck off *à trait de plume*, have great point and neatness. Take the following billet, which formed the label to a closed basket, containing the ponderous present alluded to, last Michaelmas Day:—

"*To Miss M.*
'When this you see
Remember me,'
Was long a phrase in use;
And so I send
To you, dear friend,
My proxy. 'What?' A goose!"

those of the unfurred unfeathered animals, who walk on two legs, and talk, and are called rational. My beautiful white greyhound, Mayflower,* for instance, is as whimsical as the finest lady in the land. Amongst her other fancies, she has taken a violent affection for a most hideous stray dog, who made his appearance here about six months ago, and contrived to pick up a living in the village, one can hardly tell how. Now appealing to the charity of old Rachel Strong, the laundress —a dog-lover by profession; now winning a meal from the light-footed and open-hearted lasses at the Rose; now standing on his hindlegs, to extort by sheer beggary a scanty morsel from some pair of "drouthy cronies," or solitary drover, discussing his dinner or supper on the alehouse-bench; now catching a mouthful, flung to him in pure contempt by some scornful gentleman of the shoulder-knot, mounted on his throne, the coach-box, whose notice he had attracted by dint of ugliness; now sharing the commons of Master Keep the shoemaker's pigs; now succeeding to the reversion of the well-gnawed bone of Master Brown the shopkeeper's fierce house-dog; now filching the skim-milk of Dame Wheeler's cat:—spit at by the cat; worried by the mastiff; chased by the pigs; screamed at by the dame; stormed at by the shoemaker; flogged by the shopkeeper; teazed by all the children, and scouted by all the animals of the parish;—but yet living through his griefs, and bearing them patiently, "for sufferance is the badge of all his tribe;"—and even seeming to find, in an occasional full meal, or a gleam of sunshine, or a wisp of dry straw on which to repose his sorry carcase, some comfort in his disconsolate condition.

In this plight was he found by May, the most high-blooded and aristocratic of greyhounds; and from this plight did May rescue him;—invited him into her territory, the stable; resisted all attempts to turn him out; reinstated him there, in spite of maid and boy, and mistress, and master; wore out every body's opposition, by the activity of her protection, and the pertinacity of her self-will; made him sharer of her bed and of her mess; and, finally, established him as one of the family as firmly as herself.

Dash—for he has even won himself a name amongst us; before he was anonymous—Dash is a sort of a kind of a spaniel; at least there is in his mongrel composition some sign of that beautiful race. Besides his ugliness, which is of the worst sort—that is to say, the shabbiest—he has a limp on one leg that gives a peculiarly one-sided awkwardness to his gait; but independently of his great merit in being May's pet, he has other merits which serve to account for that phenomenon—being, beyond all comparison, the most faithful, attached, and affectionate animal that I have ever known; and that is saying much. He seems to think it necessary to atone for his ugliness by extra good conduct, and does so dance on his lame leg, and so wag his scrubby tail, that it does any one who has a taste for happiness good to look at him—so that he may now be said to stand on his own footing. We are all rather ashamed of him when strangers come in the way, and think it necessary to explain that he is May's pet; but amongst ourselves, and those who are used to his appearance, he has reached the point of favouritism in his own person. I have, in common with wiser women, the feminine weakness of loving whatever loves me—and therefore, I like Dash. His master has found out that he is a capital finder, and in spite of his lameness will hunt a field or beat a cover with any spaniel in England—and, therefore, *he* likes Dash. The boy has fought a battle in defence of his beauty, with another boy, bigger than himself, and beat his opponent most handsomely—and, therefore, *he* likes Dash; and the maids like him, or pretend to like him, because we do—as is the fashion of that pliant and imitative class. And now Dash and May follow us everywhere, and are going with us to the Shaw, as I said before—or rather to the cottage by the Shaw, to bespeak milk and butter of our little dairywoman, Hannah Bint—a housewifely occupation, to which we owe some of our pleasantest rambles.

And now we pass the sunny, dusty village street—who would have thought, a month ago, that we should complain of sun and dust again!—and turn the corner where the two great oaks hang so beautifully over the clear deep pond, mixing their cool green shadows with the bright blue sky, and the white clouds that flit over it; and loiter at the wheeler's shop, always picturesque, with its tools, and its work, and its materials, all so various in form, and so harmonious in colour; and its noisy, merry workmen, hammering and singing, and making a various harmony also. The shop is rather empty to-day, for its usual inmates are busy on the green beyond the pond —one set building a cart, another painting a wagon. And then we leave the village quite behind, and proceed slowly up the cool, quiet lane, between tall hedge-rows of the darkest verdure, overshadowing banks green and fresh as an emerald.

Not so quick as I expected, though—for they are shooting here to-day, as Dash and I have both discovered: he with great delight, for a gun to him is as a trumpet to a war-horse; I with no less annoyance, for I don't think that a partridge itself, barring the accident of being killed, can be more startled than I at that abominable explosion. Dash has certainly better blood in his veins than any one would guess to look at him. He even

* Dead, alas, since this was written!

shows some inclination to elope into the fields, in pursuit of those noisy iniquities. But he is an orderly person after all, and a word has checked him.

Ah! here is a shriller din mingling with the small artillery—a shriller and more continuous. We are not yet arrived within sight of Master Weston's cottage, snugly hidden behind a clump of elms; but we are in full hearing of Dame Weston's tongue, raised as usual to scolding-pitch. The Westons are new arrivals in our neighbourhood, and the first thing heard of them was a complaint from the wife to our magistrate of her husband's beating her: it was a regular charge of assault—an information in full form. A most piteous case did Dame Weston make of it, softening her voice for the nonce into a shrill tremulous whine, and exciting the pity and anger—pity towards herself, anger towards her husband—of the whole female world, pitiful and indignant as the female world is wont to be on such occasions. Every woman in the parish railed at Master Weston; and poor Master Weston was summoned to attend the bench on the ensuing Saturday, and answer the charge; and such was the clamour abroad and at home, that the unlucky culprit, terrified at the sound of a warrant and a constable, ran away, and was not heard of for a fortnight.

At the end of that time he was discovered, and brought to the bench; and Dame Weston again told her story, and, as before, on the full cry. She had no witnesses, and the bruises of which she made complaint had disappeared, and there were no women present to make common cause with the sex. Still, however, the general feeling was against Master Weston; and it would have gone hard with him when he was called in, if a most unexpected witness had not risen up in his favour. His wife had brought in her arms a little girl about eighteen months old, partly perhaps to move compassion in her favour; for a woman with a child in her arms is always an object that excites kind feelings. The little girl had looked shy and frightened, and had been as quiet as a lamb during her mother's examination; but she no sooner saw her father, from whom she had been a fortnight separated, than she clapped her hands, and laughed, and cried, "Daddy! daddy!" and sprang into his arms, and hung round his neck, and covered him with kisses—again shouting, "Daddy, come home! daddy! daddy!"—and finally nestled her little head in his bosom, with a fulness of contentment, an assurance of tenderness and protection such as no wife-beating tyrant ever did inspire, or ever could inspire since the days of King Solomon. Our magistrates acted in the very spirit of the Jewish monarch: they accepted the evidence of nature, and dismissed the complaint. And subsequent events have fully justified their decision; Mistress Weston proving not only renowned for the feminine accomplishment of scolding (tongue-banging, it is called in our parts, a compound word which deserves to be Greek), but actually herself addicted to administering the conjugal discipline, the infliction of which she was pleased to impute to her luckless husband.

Now we cross the stile, and walk up the fields to the Shaw. How beautifully green this pasture looks! and how finely the evening sun glances between the boles of that clump of trees, beach, and ash, and aspen! and how sweet the hedge-rows are with woodbine and wild scabius, or, as the country people call it, the gipsy-rose! Here is little Dolly Weston, the unconscious witness, with cheeks as red as a real rose, tottering up the path to meet her father. And here is the carroty-polled urchin, George Coper, returning from work, and singing "Home! sweet Home!" at the top of his voice; and then, when the notes prove too high for him, continuing the air in a whistle, until he has turned the impassable corner; then taking up again the song and the words, "Home! sweet Home!" and looking as if he felt their full import, ploughboy though he be. And so he does; for he is one of a large, an honest, a kind, and an industrious family, where all goes well, and where the poor ploughboy is sure of finding cheerful faces and coarse comforts—all that he has learned to desire. Oh, to be as cheaply and as thoroughly contented as George Coper! All his luxuries, a cricket-match!—all his wants satisfied in "home! sweet home!"

Nothing but noises to-day! They are clearing Farmer Brooke's great bean-field, and crying the "Harvest Home!" in a chorus, before which all other sounds—the song, the scolding, the gunnery—fade away, and become faint echoes. A pleasant noise is that! though, for one's ears' sake, one makes some haste to get away from it. And here, in happy time, is that pretty wood, the Shaw, with its broad path-way, its tangled dingles, its nuts and its honeysuckles;—and, carrying away a fagot of those sweetest flowers, we reach Hannah Bint's: of whom, and of whose doings we shall say more another time.

Note.—Poor Dash is also dead. We did not keep him long, indeed I believe that he died of the transition from starvation to good feed, as dangerous to a dog's stomach and to most stomachs, as the less agreeable change from good feed to starvation. He has been succeeded in place and favour by another Dash, not less amiable in demeanour and far more creditable in appearance, bearing no small resemblance to the pet spaniel of my friend Master Dinely, he who stole the bone from the magpies, and who figures as the first Dash of this volume. Let not the unwary reader opine,

that in assigning the same name to three several individuals, I am acting as an humble imitator of the inimitable writer who has given immortality to the Peppers and the Mustards, on the one hand; or showing a poverty of invention or a want of acquaintance with the bead-roll of canine appellations on the other. I merely with my usual scrupulous fidelity take the names as I find them. The fact is, that half the handsome spaniels in England are called Dash, just as half the tall footmen are called Thomas. The name belongs to the species. Sitting in an open carriage one day last summer at the door of a farm-house where my father had some business, I saw a noble and beautiful animal of this kind lying in great state and laziness on the steps, and felt an immediate desire to make acquaintance with him. My father, who had had the same fancy, had patted him and called him "poor fellow" in passing, without eliciting the smallest notice in return. "Dash!" cried I at a venture, "good Dash! noble Dash!" and up he started in a moment, making but one spring from the door into the gig. Of course I was right in my guess. The gentleman's name was Dash.

LITTLE MISS WREN.

Of all the seasons for marriages that I have ever known, this wet, dirty, snowy, frosty winter, (of 1829) with its hot fits and its cold fits, and its fogs that were neither hot nor cold, but a happy mixture of all the evils of both—chilly as sleet, stifling as steam;—of all seasons, this, which having murderously slaughtered two hundred head of fine geraniums, my property, I set down as fatal!—of all the seasons that I remember, this has been the most fertile in marriages. Half the belles in our neighbourhood have disappeared,—not whisked away by fraud or force, as Lovelace carried off Clarissa, but decorously wooed and won, as Sir Charles Grandison wedded Miss Byron. Still they are gone. On Monday, a rich member of Parliament drives away to Paris with one county beauty; on Tuesday a dashing Captain of Hussars sets out for Florence with another; on Wednesday a third glides quietly away to a country parsonage with her handsome bridegroom, a young clergyman. Balls and concerts are spangled with silver favours; white gloves are your only present; the pretty nuptial cards knotted together with satin ribbon, fly about like so many doves; and bride-cake is in such abundance, that even the little boys and girls at home for the holidays, chartered gluttons as they are, cry, "Hold, enough!"

There is no end to the shapes in which matrimony meets you. Miss A.'s servant comes to you wanting a place—her mistress is going to be married! Mr. B.'s hunters are on sale—their master is going to be married! The dress-maker won't undertake to make a new gown under a fortnight—Lady C. is going to be married! The Grove is taken by a Mr. D., of whom nobody knows any thing—except that he is going to be married! Nay, marriages jostle: my worthy friend the Rector of Ashley, a most popular person at all times, and certainly the favourite marrier of the county, was wanted to tie the hymeneal knot the same morning by two couples who live forty miles apart; and Sir Edward E.'s wedding has been delayed for a fortnight, because that grand minister to the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious" bridals, the coachmaker, was going to be married himself!

Nothing but wedding parties are heard of hereabouts; not to be engaged to two or three would be a sad loss of caste and of consequence. I, for my own part, have been invited by half a dozen young ladies to see them exchange their freedom "for a name and for a ring," and am just returned from the most magnificent espousals that have been celebrated even in this season of wedlock.

One of the most distinguished and remarkable persons in these parts, not very fruitful of celebrated personages, is undoubtedly my fair friend Miss Philippa Wren, of Wrensnest in this county,—a lady well known through the neighbourhood, not merely because she is an heiress of good family, and heiresses of any sort are rarities everywhere, nor because she is amiable and accomplished, as the newspapers say of heiresses and of young ladies in general; but for a quality proper and peculiar to her own individual person,—that quality in short, which has procured for her the universal cognomen of little Miss Wren.

Partly, no doubt, this distinguishing characteristic may have belonged to her by inheritance. The Wrens have been a tiny race from generation to generation, gradually diminishing in size and stature, tapering away like the point of a pyramid, until they reached the very climax of smallness in the person of their fair descendant, the least woman, not to be quite a dwarf, that ever was seen out of Lilliput.

When born it was such a fairy, that nurses, doctors, aunts and grandmammas, almost lost the fear of rearing in the perplexity of dressing it, flung away the superb baby-linen in despair, and were fain to wrap the young stranger in cotton, until the apparel of a neighbouring doll could be borrowed for its service. All the gossips gazed, marvelled, and admired, and as time wore on, and the little lady of the manor grew older, without, as it seemed, growing bigger, the admiration increased. Every epoch of infancy was a fresh theme of village wonder. Walking and talking assumed, in her case, the form of miracles; and that such an atom should cut teeth seemed little less incredible than that Richard should

be born with them. All through her childhood, the tiny heiress passed, with every stranger that saw her, for a rare specimen of precocious talent, was my-deared, petted, fondled and noticed at eighteen, and might now at five-and-twenty, sink at least fifteen years of her age with perfect impunity, in any company in Europe.

Such a deception, however, is the farthest thing possible from her desire. She would rather, if one of the two evils must be endured, look fifteen years older. Shrewd, quick-witted, keen and capable on all other points, the peculiarity of her person has in this, as in many other instances, influenced her character and her destiny. The sole object of her ambition, "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself," is to be great (I use the word in the purely primitive sense, large, big, and tall) in despite of nature. Even that ambitious fowl, a she-bantam, does not imitate more absurdly the magnificent demeanour of a Poland hen, than poor Miss Wren emulates the superb and dignified graces of her next neighbour, Miss Stork, a grenadier of a woman, who labours under the converse misfortune to that which has befallen herself, and stands six feet without her shoes. Never was erectness so exemplary and unrelaxing. A poker seems to poke when compared with her perpendicularity. Governesses and dancing-masters reversed, in her case, their usual lectures, complained of her inflexible uprightness, and scolded her for holding up her head. She constantly perches herself on the highest chair in the room, and stands, walks, and dances on tiptoe,—a process, which, like most attempts to seem what we are not, only serves to make her calamity the more remarkable.

In her dress she practises the same manœuvres with the same ill success; wears very high bonnets with very high plumes; piles as many flowers upon her head as might serve to deck a may-pole; has heels to her boots, false bottoms to her slippers; and punctually follows, in the rest of her equipment, the fashion of her above-mentioned neighbour, Miss Stork, the ultimate object of her ambition. Frills, collars, flounces, and trimmings of all sorts are made exactly after her pattern, deducting no inch of fulness or atom of width; so that, the fair model Miss Stork herself being by no means sparing of adornments, her poor little imitator looks like a mere bundle of finery, an abridgment of the reigning fashion, and makes pretty much such a figure as a well-sized puppet might exhibit, if dressed in an extempore suit of woman's clothes cut shorter for the occasion. Remonstrance is quite out of the question. Even the omnipotent dictum of a French milliner, and the oily flattery of a lady's maid have been tried in vain on Miss Wren. She turned off her shoemaker for unpalatable praise of her little foot, for which, indeed, the famous "glass slipper" of the Fairy Tales would hardly have been small enough; and cashiered a conscientious mantua-maker for offering to deduct a sovereign in the price of a satin cloak in consideration of its shortness. What worse could she have done had the lady of the needle been wholly honest, and deducted two sovereigns, as well she might, from the seven-guinea cloak? I do think she would have brought an action for libel.

She inhabits large houses; sits on great chairs; rides high horses; has a Newfoundland dog for a pet; and drives a huge heavy landau, where she is perched between a tall footman and a fat coachman, and looks, when one catches sight of her, something like a minnow between a salmon and a turbot, or a goldfinch between a peacock and a goose. The bigger the thing, the more she affects it: plays on the organ, although the chords are as unreachable to her delicate fingers, as Gulliver found those of his instrument at Brobdignag; paints at an easel so high that she is forced to stand on steps; and professes to read comfortably from no book smaller than a folio, though it is morally certain that she must walk backwards and forwards to compass the page. The slender jessamine hand, written with a crowquill on pink note paper, which some fine ladies cultivate so successfully, is her aversion: her letters are substantial specimens of stationery, written in a huge text hand on thick extra-post paper, and sealed with a coat of arms as big as a crown piece, —which magnificent seal, by the way, depending by a chain that might lock a wagon-wheel, from a watch of her maternal grandfather as big as a saucer, she constantly wears about her person.

In flowers her taste is of equal magnitude. Dahlias, sunflowers, hollyhocks, and tree-roses, together with the whole tribe of *majors* (*minors*, of course, she avoids and detests,) and all those shrubs and creepers whose blossoms are out of reach, are her favourites. She will dangle a bush of rhododendron or azalea in her hand, and wear a magnolia in her bosom for a nosegay. In her love of space, her desire for "ample room and verge enough," she has done her best to convert her pretty place of Wrensnest into a second edition of Timon's Villa, "*Her* pond an ocean, *her* parterre a down," and in her passion for great effects would think no more of moving an oak of a century old from its native forest than I should of transplanting a daisy. Cloud-capt mountains, inaccessible rocks, and the immeasurable ocean, are the only prospects for her; she raves of the stupendous scenery of America, and will certainly some day or other make a journey of pleasure to the Andes or the Cordilleras.

As in nature, so in art, the grand is her standard of excellence. Colossal statues, and pictures larger than life she delights in; wor-

ships Martin, adores Michael Angelo, prefers St. Peter's to the Parthenon, and the Farnese Hercules to the Apollo Belvidere. When she dies, she will desire a pyramid for her mausoleum. The dome of St. Paul's, which served her celebrated namesake, would hardly satisfy her ambition.—But why do I talk of tombs and of namesakes? Am I not just come from the wedding breakfast? and is not "Little Miss Wren" Miss Wren no longer? Even while I write, bells are ringing, horses prancing, bridemaids simpering, and wedding-cake travelling nine times through the Baroness Blankenhausen's fairy ring.

The bridegroom is a fair well-conditioned Saxon, six feet three inches high, and broad in proportion, with a superb genealogical tree, quarterings innumerable, and an estate by no means suitable to his dimensions: for the rest, remarkable for nothing except his great turn for silence,* the number of segars which he puffs away in the course of the day, and two little Marlborough spaniels which he is accustomed to carry about in his coat-pockets. I hope he won't put his wife there. Really the temptation will be strong; but the Baron is a giant of grace, a well-mannered monster; and to judge from the carefulness and delicacy with which he lifted his fair bride over a puddle in the church-yard, to save her white satin shoes (she protesting all the time against such a display of his gallantry, and declaring that she could have stept over the pool had it been twice as wide),—to judge from the coup d'essai in husbandship, I see no cause to doubt that he will treat my friend as tenderly and gingerly, as if he were a little girl of six years old, and the fair Phillippa his first wax doll.

* Persons of the larger size are often very silent. An ingenious friend of mine holds a theory that the desirable quantity of animal spirits is originally distributed pretty equally amongst men; but that it is lost, absorbed, and diluted in people of unusual bulk, and only shines forth in full vigour in those of a smaller frame: as the glass of alcohol, which will powerfully impregnate a pint of water, will be scarcely perceived in a gallon. For instance, (waiving particular examples, of which he brought many,) he holds that a company of light infantry would prove far more vivacious than a troop of life-guards; and has no hesitation in asserting that the famous tall regiment of Frederick the Great must have been the dullest part of the whole Prussian army. I do not answer for the truth of his assertion, though my friend makes out a very good case, as your clever theorist seldom fails to do, right or wrong. Indeed I brought Falstaff as a case in point against him. He admitted the mere bulk, the "huge rotundity," and the quantity of animal spirits that distinguished the witty knight, "but then," added he, "I am sure he was short."

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

HANNAH BINT.

The Shaw, leading to Hannah Bint's habitation, is, as I perhaps have said before, a very pretty mixture of wood and coppice; that is to say, a tract of thirty or forty acres covered with fine growing timber—ash, and oak, and elm—very regularly planted; and interspersed here and there with large patches of underwood, hazel, maple, birch, holly, and hawthorn, woven into almost impenetrable thickets by long wreaths of the bramble, the briony, and the briar-rose, or by the pliant and twisting garlands of the wild honeysuckle. In other parts, the Shaw is quite clear of its bosky undergrowth, and clothed only with large beds of feathery fern, or carpets of flowers, primroses, orchises, cowslips, ground-ivy, crane's-bill, cotton-grass, Solomon's seal, and forget-me-not, crowded together with a profusion and brilliancy of colour, such as I have rarely seen equalled even in a garden. Here the wild hyacinth really enamels the ground with its fresh and lovely purple; there,

"On aged roots, with bright green mosses clad,
Dwells the wood sorrel, with its bright thin leaves
Heart-shaped and triply folded, and its root
Creeping like beaded coral; whilst around
Flourish the copse's pride, anemones,
With rays like golden studs on ivory laid
Most delicate; but touched with purple clouds,
Fit crown for April's fair but changeful brow."

The variety is much greater than I have enumerated; for the ground is so unequal, now swelling in gentle ascents, now dimpling into dells and hollows, and the soil so different in different parts, that the sylvan Flora is unusually extensive and complete.

The season is, however, now too late for this floweriness; and except the tufted woodbines, which have continued in bloom during the whole of this lovely autumn, and some lingering garlands of the purple wild-veitch, wreathing round the thickets, and uniting with the ruddy leaves of the bramble, and the pale festoons of the briony, there is little to call one's attention from the grander beauties of the trees—the sycamore, its broad leaves already spotted—the oak, heavy with acorns—and the delicate shining rind of the weeping birch, "the lady of the woods," thrown out in strong relief from a back-ground of holly and hawthorn, each studded with coral berries, and backed with old beeches, beginning to assume the rich, tawny hue which makes them perhaps the most picturesque of autumnal trees, as the transparent freshness of their young foliage is undoubtedly the choicest ornament of the forest in spring.

A sudden turn round one of these magnificent beeches brings us to the boundary of the Shaw, and leaning upon a rude gate, we look over an open space of about ten acres of

ground, still more varied and broken than that which we have passed, and surrounded on all sides by thick woodland. As a piece of colour, nothing can be well finer. The ruddy glow of the heath-flower, contrasting, on the one hand, with the golden-blossomed furze—on the other, with a patch of buck-wheat, of which the bloom is not past, although the grain be ripening, the beautiful buck-wheat, whose transparent leaves and stalks are so brightly tinged with vermilion, while the delicate pink-white of the flower, a paler persicaria, has a feathery fall, at once so rich and so graceful, and a fresh and reviving odour, like that of birch trees in the dew of a May evening. The bank that surmounts this attempt at cultivation is crowned with the late foxglove and the stately mullein; the pasture of which so great a part of the waste consists, looks as green as an emerald; a clear pond, with the bright sky reflected in it, lets light into the picture: the white cottage of the keeper peeps from the opposite coppice; and the vine-covered dwelling of Hannah Bint rises from amidst the pretty garden, which lies bathed in the sunshine around it.

The living and moving accessories are all in keeping with the cheerfulness and repose of the landscape. Hannah's cow grazing quietly beside the keeper's pony: a brace of fat pointer puppies holding amicable intercourse with a litter of young pigs; ducks, geese, cocks, hens, and chickens scattered over the turf; Hannah herself sallying forth from the cottage-door, with her milk-bucket in her hand, and her little brother following with the milking-stool.

My friend, Hannah Bint, is by no means an ordinary person. Her father, Jack Bint, (for in all his life he never arrived at the dignity of being called John, indeed in our parts, he was commonly known by the cognomen of London Jack,) was a drover of high repute in his profession. No man, between Salisbury Plain and Smithfield, was thought to conduct a flock of sheep so skilfully through all the difficulties of lanes and commons, streets and high-roads, as Jack Bint, aided by Jack Bint's famous dog, Watch; for Watch's rough, honest face, black, with a little white about the muzzle, and one white ear, was as well known at fairs and markets, as his master's equally honest and weather-beaten visage. Lucky was the dealer that could secure their services; Watch being renowned for keeping a flock together better than any shepherd's dog on the road—Jack, for delivering them more punctually, and in better condition. No man had a more thorough knowledge of the proper night stations, where good feed might be procured for his charge, and good liquor for Watch and himself; Watch, like other sheep dogs, being accustomed to live chiefly on bread and beer. His master, although not averse to a pot of good double X, preferred gin; and they who plod slowly along, through wet and weary ways, in frost and in fog, have undoubtedly a stronger temptation to indulge in that cordial and reviving stimulus, than we water-drinkers, sitting in warm and comfortable rooms, can readily imagine. For certain, our drover could never resist the gentle seduction of the gin-bottle, and being of a free, merry, jovial temperament, one of those persons commonly called good fellows, who like to see others happy in the same way with themselves, he was apt to circulate it at his own expense, to the great improvement of his popularity, and the great detriment of his finances.

All this did vastly well whilst his earnings continued proportionate to his spendings, and the little family at home were comfortably supported by his industry: but when a rheumatic fever came on, one hard winter, and finally settled in his limbs, reducing the most active and hardy man in the parish to the state of a confirmed cripple, then his reckless improvidence stared him in the face; and poor Jack, a thoughtless, but kind creature, and a most affectionate father, looked at his three motherless children with the acute misery of a parent, who has brought those whom he loves best in the world, to abject destitution. He found help, where he probably least expected it, in the sense and spirit of his young daughter, a girl of twelve years old.

Hannah was the eldest of the family, and had, ever since her mother's death, which event had occurred two or three years before, been accustomed to take the direction of their domestic concerns, to manage her two brothers, to feed the pigs and the poultry, and to keep house during the almost constant absence of her father. She was a quick, clever lass, of a high spirit, a firm temper, some pride, and a horror of accepting parochial relief, which is every day becoming rarer amongst the peasantry; but which forms the surest safeguard to the sturdy independence of the English character. Our little damsel possessed this quality in perfection; and when her father talked of giving up their comfortable cottage, and removing to the work-house, whilst she and her brothers must go to service, Hannah formed a bold resolution, and without disturbing the sick man by any participation of her hopes and fears, proceeded after settling their trifling affairs to act at once on her own plans and designs.

Careless of the future as the poor drover had seemed, he had yet kept clear of debt, and by subscribing constantly to a benefit club, had secured a pittance that might at least assist in supporting him during the long years of sickness and helplessness to which he was doomed to look forward. This his daughter knew. She knew, also, that the employer in whose service his health had suffered so severely, was a rich and liberal cattle-

dealer in the neighbourhood, who would willingly aid an old and faithful servant, and had, indeed, come forward with offers of money. To assistance from such a quarter Hannah saw no objection. Farmer Oakley and the parish were quite distinct things. Of him, accordingly, she asked, not money, but something much more in his own way—"a cow! any cow! old or lame, or what not, so that it were a cow! she would be bound to keep it well; if she did not, he might take it back again. She even hoped to pay for it by and by, by instalments, but that she would not promise!" and partly amused, partly interested by the child's earnestness, the wealthy yeoman gave her, not as a purchase, but as a present, a very fine young Alderney. She then went to the lord of the manor, and, with equal knowledge of character, begged his permission to keep her cow on the Shaw common. "Farmer Oakley had given her a fine Alderney, and she would be bound to pay the rent, and keep her father off the parish, if he would only let it graze on the waste;" and he, too, half from real good-nature—half, not to be outdone in liberality by his tenant, not only granted the requested permission, but reduced the rent so much, that the produce of the vine seldom fails to satisfy their kind landlord.

Now, Hannah showed great judgment in setting up as a dairy-woman. She could not have chosen an occupation more completely unoccupied, or more loudly called for. One of the most provoking of the petty difficulties which beset people with a small establishment, in this neighbourhood, is the trouble, almost the impossibility, of procuring the pastoral luxuries of milk, eggs, and butter, which rank, unfortunately, amongst the indispensable necessaries of housekeeping. To your thoroughbred Londoner, who, whilst grumbling over his own breakfast, is apt to fancy that thick cream, and fresh butter, and new-laid eggs, grow, so to say, in the country—form an actual part of its natural produce—it may be some comfort to learn, that in this great grazing district, however the calves and the farmers may be the better for cows, nobody else is; that farmers' wives have ceased to keep poultry; and that we unlucky villagers sit down often to our first meal in a state of destitution, which may well make him content with his thin milk and his Cambridge butter, when compared to our imputed pastoralities.

Hannah's Alderney restored to us one rural privilege. Never was so cleanly a little milkmaid. She changed away some of the cottage finery, which, in his prosperous days, poor Jack had pleased himself with bringing home; the China tea-service, the gilded mugs, and the painted waiters, for the more useful utensils of the dairy, and speedily established a regular and gainful trade in milk, eggs, butter, honey, and poultry—for poultry they had always kept.

Her domestic management prospered equally. Her father, who retained the perfect use of his hands, began a manufacture of mats and baskets, which he constructed with great nicety and adroitness; the eldest boy, a sharp and clever lad, cut for him his rushes and osiers; erected, under his sister's direction, a shed for the cow, and enlarged and cultivated the garden (always with the good leave of her kind patron the lord of the manor) until it became so ample, that the produce not only kept the pig, and half kept the family, but afforded another branch of merchandise to the indefatigable directress of the establishment. For the younger boy, less quick and active, Hannah contrived to obtain an admission to the charity school, where he made great progress—retaining him at home, however, in the hay-making, and leasing season, or whenever his services could be made available, to the great annoyance of the schoolmaster, whose favourite he is, and who piques himself so much on George's scholarship, (your heavy sluggish boy at country work often turns out quick at his book,) that it is the general opinion that this much-vaunted pupil will, in process of time, be promoted to the post of assistant, and may, possibly, in course of years, rise to the dignity of a parish pedagogue in his own person; so that his sister, although still making him useful at odd times, now considers George as pretty well off her hands, whilst his elder brother Tom, could take an under-gardener's place directly, if he were not too important at home to be spared even for a day.

In short, during the five years that she has ruled at the Shaw cottage, the world has gone well with Hannah Bint. Her cow, her calves, her pigs, her bees, her poultry, have each, in their several ways, thriven and prospered. She has even brought Watch to like buttermilk as well as strong beer, and has nearly persuaded her father (to whose wants and wishes she is most anxiously attentive) to accept of milk as a substitute for gin. Not but Hannah hath had her enemies as well as her betters. Why should she not? The old woman at the lodge, who always piqued herself on being spiteful, and crying down new ways, foretold from the first that she would come to no good, and could not forgive her for falsifying her prediction; and Betty Barnes, the slatternly widow of a tippling farmer, who rented a field, and set up a cow herself, and was universally discarded for insufferable dirt, said all that the wit of an envious woman could devise against Hannah and her Alderney; nay, even Ned Miles, the keeper, her next neighbour, who had whilome held entire sway over the Shaw common, as well as its coppices, grumbled as much as so good-natured and genial a person could grumble, when he found a little girl sharing his dominion, a cow grazing beside his pony, and

vulgar cocks and hens hovering around the buck-wheat destined to feed his noble pheasants. Nobody that had been accustomed to see that paragon of keepers, so tall and manly, and pleasant-looking, with his merry eye, and his knowing smile, striding gaily along, in his green coat, and his gold-laced hat, with Neptune, his noble Newfoundland dog, (a retriever in the sporting world,) and his beautiful spaniel Flirt at his heels, could conceive how askew he looked, when he first found Hannah and Watch holding equal reign over his old territory, the Shaw common.

Yes! Hannah hath had her enemies; but they are passing away. The old woman at the lodge is dead, poor creature; and Betty Barnes, having herself taken to tippling, has lost the few friends she once possessed, and looks, luckless wretch, as if she would soon die too! — and the keeper — why, he is not dead, or like to die; but the change that has taken place there is the most astonishing of all—except, perhaps, the change in Hannah herself.

Few damsels of twelve years old, generally a very pretty age, were less pretty than Hannah Bint. Short and stunted in her figure, thin in face, sharp in feature, with a muddled complexion, wild sunburnt hair, and eyes, whose very brightness had in them something startling, over-informed, super-subtle, too clever for her age, — at twelve years old she had quite the air of a little old fairy. Now, at seventeen, matters are mended. Her complexion has cleared: her countenance hath developed itself; her figure has shot up into height and lightness, and a sort of rustic grace; her bright, acute eye is softened and sweetened by the womanly wish to please; her hair is trimmed, and curled and brushed, with exquisite neatness; and her whole dress arranged with that nice attention to the becoming, the suitable both in form and texture, which would be called the highest degree of coquetry, if it did not deserve the better name of propriety. Never was such a transmogrification beheld. The lass is really pretty, and Ned Miles has discovered that she is so. There he stands, the rogue, close at her side, (for he hath joined her whilst we have been telling her little story, and the milking is over!) — there he stands — holding her milk-pail in one hand, and stroking Watch with the other; whilst she is returning the compliment, by patting Neptune's magnificent head. There they stand, as much like lovers as may be; he smiling, and she blushing— he never looking so handsome, nor she so pretty in all their lives. There they stand, in blessed forgetfulness of all except each other; as happy a couple as ever trod the earth. There they stand, and one would not disturb them for all the milk and butter in Christendom. I should not wonder if they were fixing the wedding-day.

CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE.

THE ROBINS.

"What have you got in your hat, Edward?" said Arthur Maynard to his cousin Edward Stanhope, as they met one day in our village street, near which they both resided; "what can you have there? a bird's nest?"

"Oh I hope not!" exclaimed Julia Maynard, who was walking with her brother and a younger sister, "taking bird's nests is cruel."

"Cruel or not, Miss Julia," replied Edward, "a bird's nest it is. Look, Arthur," continued he, displaying a nest full of poor little unfledged creatures, opening four great mouths as wide as they could gape; "look, they are robins."

"Robins! robin redbreasts! the household bird! the friend of man!" cried Arthur; "take a robin's nest! oh, fie, fie!"

"The robin redbreast," said little Sophy Maynard, "that when the poor Children in the Wood were starved to death, covered them over with leaves. Did you never hear old nurse Andrews repeat the old ballad? I can almost say it myself:—

> "No burial this pretty pair
> Of any man receives,
> Till Robin Redbreast painfully
> Did cover them with leaves,"—

shouted Sophy: "you that pretend to be so fond of poetry, to take a robin's nest."

"Poetry!" rejoined Edward, contemptuously, "a penny ballad! an old woman's song! call that poetry!"

"I like to hear it though," persisted little Sophy; "I had rather hear nurse Andrews repeat the Children in the Wood, than any thing; call it what names you like."

"And it was but the other day," said Julia, "that papa made me learn some verses just to the same effect out of Mr. Lamb's Specimens. Did you ever hear them?

> Call to the robin redbreast and the wren,
> Since o'er shady groves they hover,
> And with flowers and leaves do cover
> The friendless bodies of unburied men.

Now I am quite sure that these lines are poetry; and, at all events, every body holds the robin sacred for his social qualities, he is so tame, so confiding, so familiar; no one would ever think of taking his nest, even if bird's-nesting were not the cruellest thing in the world," continued Julia, returning to her first exclamation. "Every body cherishes the robin."

"So do I," replied her incorrigible cousin; "I am so fond of the robin and his note, that I mean to bring up all four of these young ones, and tame them, and make friends of them."

"Put back the nest, and I will teach you a

better way," said Arthur; "for we mean to tame some robins ourselves this summer."

"Put back the nest indeed!" rejoined Edward; "I must make haste home, and get the butler to give me a cage, and Fanny to help me to feed them. Put back the nest indeed!" and off ran the naughty taker of birds' nests, vainly pursued by little Sophy's chidings, by Julia's persuasions, by Arthur's remonstrances, and by the united predictions of all three that he would never rear the unfortunate younglings.

Very true were these predictions. One by one, in spite of all the care of Edward and his sister Fanny, who crammed them twenty times a day with all sorts of food, proper or improper, bread, meat, eggs, herbs, and insects, with every mess, in short, that they had ever heard recommended for any bird; one by one the poor little shivering creatures, shivering although wrapt in lamb's-wool and swan's-down, pined, and dwindled, and died; and Fanny, a kind-hearted little girl, fretted and cried; and Edward, not less vexed, but too proud to cry, grumbled at his ill-luck, and declared that he would never trouble himself with birds again as long as he lived. "I wonder how Arthur has succeeded with his!" thought he to himself; "I think he and the girls talked of getting some—but of course, they all died. I am sure no people could take more pains than Fanny and I. I'll never trouble myself with birds again."

About two months after this soliloquy, the young Stanhopes received an invitation to dine with their cousins, for it was Sophy's birthday, and the children had a half-holiday; and after dinner they were allowed to eat their cherries and strawberries in their own verandah, a place they were all very fond of. And a very pretty place this verandah was.

Fancy a deep shaded trellis running along one end of the house, covered with vines, passion-flowers, clematis, and jessamine, looking over gay flower-beds, the children's own flower-beds, to an arbour of honeysuckle, laburnum, and china-roses, which Arthur had made for Julia; clusters of green-house plants, their own pet geraniums, arranged round the pillars of the verandah; and the verandah itself, furnished with their own tables and chairs, and littered with their toys and their small garden tools: as pretty an out-of-door play-room as heart could desire.

It was a fine sunny afternoon towards the end of June, and the young folks enjoyed the fruits and the flowers, and the sweet scent of the bean blossoms and the new-mown hay in the neighbouring fields, and were as happy as happy could be. At last, after the girls had pointed out their richest geraniums and largest heartsease, and they had been properly praised and admired, Arthur said, "I think it is time to show Edward our robins." And at the word, little Sophy began strewing bread crums at one end of the verandah as fast as her hands could go.

"Bobby! Bobby! pretty Bobby!" cried Sophy; and immediately the prettiest robin that ever was seen came flying out of the arbour towards her; not in a direct line, but zigzag as it were, stopping first at a rose tree, then swinging on the top of a lily, then perching on the branch of a campanula that bent under him—still coming nearer and nearer, and listening, and turning up his pretty head as Sophy continued to cry, "Bobby! Bobby!" and sometimes bowing his body, and jerking his tail in token of pleased acknowledgement, until at last he alighted on the ground, and began picking up the bread crums with which it was strewed. Whilst presently two or three young robins with their speckled breasts (for the red feathers do not appear until they are three or four months old) came fluttering about the verandah, flying in and out quite close to the children, hopping round them, and feeding at their very feet; not shy at all, not even cautious like the old birds, who had seen more of the world, and looked at the strangers with their bright piercing eyes rather mistrustfully, as if they knew, that there were such things as little boys who take birds' nests, and little girls who keep birds in cages.

"Bobby! pretty Bobby!" continued Sophy, quite enchanted at the good conduct of her pets, and calling upon her cousins for their tribute of admiration. Fanny willingly expressed her delight; and Edward looking somewhat foolish, wondered how they became so tame.

"We used to throw down the crums from breakfast and dinner in this place all the winter," said Julia; "the poor birds are so glad of them in the hard weather! And one particular robin used to come for them every day, and grew quite familiar; he would even wait here for us, and fly to meet us as soon as that quick eye of his spied a white frock turning the corner. So then we began to talk to him, and to feed him regularly."

"I always saved a great bit of my bread for Bobby," interrupted Sophy.

"And he grew as tame as you see; and when he had young ones, he brought them here with him," resumed her sister.

"You should have seen them the first day," said Sophy; "that was the prettiest sight. The little things did not know how to help themselves, so there they stood about, some on the geraniums and some on the rose trees, chirping, and opening their bills for the old ones to feed them; and the poor old birds flew about from one to the other with bread crums, not taking a morsel themselves. You cannot think how much the young ones ate! There was one great greedy fellow who perched on my rake, who made his poor papa bring him seven mouthfuls before he was satisfied. And now they are saucy! see how saucy they are!"

continued the little girl as one of the boldest came close to her, and caught a crum which she was flinging to him before it reached the ground, "see how saucy! O pretty, pretty Bobbies! I do love them so."

"We all like the poor confiding creatures who pay us the compliment of trusting so entirely in our kindness and good faith, I believe," said Arthur, half laughing at her eagerness; "and after all, Edward," added he, as the two boys, bat in hand, marched off to cricket, "after all, you must confess that our method of taming robins is better than yours, and that one bird who comes to you at liberty, of his own free will, is worth a dozen kidnapped in the nest, luckless wretches, and mewed up in a cage."

Edward confessed that his cousin was right, and never took a bird's nest again.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

THE GENERAL AND HIS LADY.

All persons of a certain standing in life, remember — for certainly nothing was ever more unforgetable—the great scarlet fever of England, when volunteering was the order of the day; when you could scarcely meet with a man who was not, under some denomination or other, a soldier; when a civil topic could hardly find a listener; when little boys played at reviewing, and young ladies learned the sword exercise. It was a fine ebullition of national feeling — of loyalty and of public spirit, and cannot be looked back to without respect; but, at the moment, the strange contrasts—the perpetual discrepancies—and the comical self-importance which it produced and exhibited, were infinitely diverting. I was a very little girl at the time; but even now I cannot recollect without laughing, the appearance of a cornet of yeomanry cavalry, who might have played Falstaff without stuffing, and was obliged to complete his military decorations by wearing (and how he contrived to keep up the slippery girdle, one can hardly imagine) three silken sashes sewed into one! To this day, too, I remember the chuckling delight with which a worthy linen-draper of my acquaintance heard himself addressed as Captain, whilst measuring a yard of ribbon; pretending to make light of the appellation, but evidently as proud of his title as a newly dubbed knight, or a peer of the last edition; and I never shall forget the astonishment with which I beheld a field-officer, in his double epaulettes, advance obsequiously to the carriage-door, to receive an order for five shillings worth of stationery! The prevailing spirit fell in exactly with the national character,—loyal, patriotic, sturdy, and independent; very proud, and a little vain; fond of excitement, and not indifferent to personal distinction; the whole population borne along by one laudable and powerful impulse, and yet each man preserving, in the midst of that great leveller, military discipline, his individual peculiarities and blameless self-importance. It was a most amusing era!

In large country towns, especially where they mustered two or three different corps, and the powerful stimulant of emulation was superadded to the original martial fury, the goings on of these Captain Pattypans furnished a standing comedy, particularly when aided by the solemn etiquette and strong military spirit of their wives, who took precedence according to the rank of their husbands, from the colonel's lady down to the corporal's, and were as complete martialists, as proud of the services of their respective regiments, and as much impressed with the importance of field-days and reviews, as if they had actually mounted the cockade and handled the firelock in their own proper persons. Foote's inimitable farce was more than realized; and the ridicules of that period have only escaped being perpetuated in a new "Mayor of Garrat," by the circumstance of the whole world, dramatists and all, being involved in them. "The lunacy was so ordinary, that the whippers were in *arms* too."

That day is past. Even the yeomanry cavalry, that last lingering remnant of the volunteer system, whom I have been accustomed to see annually parade through the town of B., with my pleasant friend Captain M. at their head, — that respectable body of which the band always appeared to me so much more numerous than the corps,—even that respectable body is dissolved; whilst the latest rag of the infantry service — the long-preserved uniform and cocked-hat of my old acquaintance, Dr. R., whilome physician to the B. Association, figured last summer as a scarecrow, stuffed with straw, and perched on a gate, an old gun tucked under its arm, to frighten the sparrows from his cherry-orchard! Except the real soldiers, and every now and then some dozen of fox-hunters at a hunt-ball, (whose usual dress-uniform, by the way, scarlet over black, makes them look just like a flight of ladybirds,) excepting these gallant sportsmen, and the real *bona fide* officers, one cannot now see a red coat for love or money. The glory of the volunteers is departed!

In the mean time I owe to them one of the pleasantest recollections of my early life.

It was towards the beginning of the last war, when the novelty and freshness of the volunteer spirit had somewhat subsided, and the government was beginning to organize a more regular defensive force, under the name of local militia, that our old friend Colonel Sanford was appointed, with the rank of

brigadier general, to the command of the district in which we resided. Ever since I could recollect, I had known Colonel Sanford—indeed a little brother of mine, who died at the age of six months, had had the honour to be his godson; and from my earliest remembrance, the good Colonel—fie upon me to forget his brigadiership!—the good General had been set down by myself, as well as by the rest of the world, for a confirmed old bachelor. His visits to our house had, indeed, been only occasional, since he had been almost constantly on active service, in different quarters of the globe; so that we had merely caught a sight of him as he passed from the East Indies to the West, or in his still more rapid transit, from Gibraltar to Canada. For full a dozen years, however, (and further the recollection of a young lady of sixteen could hardly be expected to extend,) he had seemed to be a gentleman very considerably on the wrong side of fifty,—"or by'r Lady inclining to threescore,"—and that will constitute an old bachelor, in the eyes of any young lady in Christendom.

His appearance was not calculated to diminish that impression. In his person, General Sanford was tall, thin, and erect; as stiff and perpendicular as a ramrod! with a bald head, most exactly powdered; a military queue; a grave formal countenance; and a complexion, partly tanned and partly frozen, by frequent exposure to the vicissitudes of different climates, into one universal and uniform tint of reddish brown, or brownish red.

His disposition was in good keeping with this solemn exterior,—grave and saturnine. He entered little into ladies' conversation, with whom, indeed, he seldom came much in contact; and for whose intellect he was apt to profess a slight shade of contempt,—an unhappy trick, to which your solemn wiseacre is sometimes addicted. All men, I fear, entertain the opinion; but the clever ones discreetly keep it to themselves. With other gentlemen he did hold grave converse, on politics, the weather, the state of the roads, the news of the day, and other gentlemanly topics; and when much at ease in his company, he would favour them with a few prosing stories, civil and military. One in particular was of formidable length. I have seen a friend of his wince as he began, "When I was in Antigua."—For the rest, the good General was an admirable person; a gentleman, by birth, education, and character; a man of the highest honour, the firmest principles, and the purest benevolence. He was an excellent officer, also, of the old school; one who had seen much service; was a rigid disciplinarian, and somewhat of a martinet;—Just the man to bring the new levies into order, although not unlikely to look with considerable scorn on the holiday soldiers, who had never seen any thing more nearly resembling a battle, than a sham fight at a review.

He paid us a visit, of course, when he came to be installed into his new office, and to take a house at B. his destined head-quarters; and after the first hearty congratulations on his promotion, his old friend, a joker by profession, began rallying him, as usual, on the necessity of taking a wife; on which, instead of returning his customary grave negative, the General stammered, looked foolish, and, incredible as it may seem that a blush could be seen through such a complexion, actually blushed; and when left alone with his host, after dinner, in lieu of the much dreaded words "When I was in Antigua!" seriously requested his advice on the subject of matrimony: which that sage counsellor, certain that a marriage was settled, and not quite sure that it had not already taken place, immediately gave, in the most satisfactory manner; and before the conversation was finished, was invited to attend the wedding on the succeeding Thursday.

The next time that we saw the General, he was accompanied by a lovely little girl, whom he introduced as his wife, but who might readily have passed for his grand-daughter. I wanted a month of sixteen; and I was then, and am now, perfectly convinced, that Mrs. Sanford was my junior. The fair bride had been a ward of the bridegroom's—the orphan, and I believe, destitute daughter of a brother officer. He had placed her, many years back, at a respectable country boarding-school, where she remained, until his new appointment, and, as he was pleased to say, his friends' suggestions induced him to resolve upon matrimony, and look about for a wife, as a necessary appendage to his official situation.

It is probable that his wife's exceeding beauty might have had something to do with his resolution as well as with his choice. I have never seen a lovelier creature. Her figure was small, round, and girlish; full of grace and symmetry. Her face had a child-like purity and brilliancy of colouring; an alternation of blush and smile, a sweetness and innocence of expression, such as might beseem a Hebe—only still more youthful than the goddess of youth. Her manners were exactly those of a child come home for the holidays,—shy and bashful, and shrinking from strangers; playful and affectionate with those whom she loved, especially her husband, who doated on her, and of whom she was very fond,—and showing, in the midst of her timidity and childishness, considerable acuteness and power of observation.

At first she seemed, as well she might be, quite bewildered by the number of persons who came to visit her. For, living in a large town, and holding in right of her husband's

office, a station of no small importance in the country, every person, of the slightest gentility in the town and neighbourhood, the whole visiting population of these, in general, very distinct and separate societies, thought proper to wait upon Mrs. Sanford. Mrs. Sanford was the fashion of B., and of B. shire. "Not to know her, argued yourself unknown." All the town and all the county called, and all the town invited her to tea, and all the county requested her company to dinner; and she, puzzled, perplexed, and amazed, hardly knowing by sight one individual of her innumerable acquaintance; unable to distinguish between one person and another; often forgetting titles; never remembering names; and ignorant as an infant of artificial distinctions, made twenty blunders in an hour; and kept the poor General, as punctilious an observer of the duties of society as of the duties of the service, in a perpetual state of fidget and alarm. Her mistakes were past all count,—she mislaid invitations; forgot engagements; mismatched her company; gave the mayor of B. the precedence of the county member; and hath been heard to ask an old bachelor after his wife, and an old maid after her children. There was no end to Mrs. Sanford's blunders. The old Brigade-Major, a veteran of the General's own standing, lame of a leg, and with a prodigious scar across his forehead, was kept on the constant stump with explanatory messages and conciliatory embassies,—and declared, that he underwent much harder duty in that service, than ever he had performed in his official capacity of drilling the awkward squad. The General, not content with dispatching his *aide-de-camp*, exhausted himself in elaborate apologies; but embassies, apologies and explanations were all unnecessary. Nobody could be angry with Mrs. Sanford. There was no resisting the charm of her blushing youthfulness; her pleading voice; her ready confession of error, and her evident sorrow for all her little sins, whether of ignorance or heedlessness; no withstanding her sweetness and simplicity. Even offended self-love, the hardest to appease of all the passions, yielded to the artlessness of Mrs. Sanford.

She, on her part, liked nothing so well as to steal away from her troublesome popularity, her visiters, and her fine clothes, to the ease and freedom of the country; to put on a white frock and straw-bonnet, and run about the woods and fields with some young female friend, primrosing or bird's-nesting, according to the season. I was her usual companion in these rambles, and enjoyed them, perhaps, as much as she did: but in a far quieter way. Her animal spirits seemed inexhaustible; I never knew her weary; and strong, agile, and entirely devoid of bodily fear, the thought of danger never seemed to come across her. How she enjoyed spending a long day at our house! now bounding over a ditch, to gather a tuft of wild flowers; now climbing a pollard, to look for a bird's nest; now driving through the lanes in a donkey-chaise; now galloping across the common on a pony; now feeding the chickens; now weeding the gravel walks; now making hay; and now reaping. These were her delights! All her pleasures were equally childish: she cherished abundance of pets, such as school-girls love; kept silk-worms, dormice, and canary birds; a parrot, a squirrel, and a monkey; three lap-dogs, and a Persian cat; enjoyed a fair, and was enchanted with a pantomime; always supposing that her party did not consist of fine people or of strangers, but was composed of those to whom she was accustomed, and who were as well disposed to merriment and good-humour as herself.

With regard to accomplishments, she knew what was commonly taught in a country school above twenty years ago, and nothing more: played a little, sang a little, talked a little indifferent French; painted shells and roses, not particularly like nature, on card-racks and hand-screens; danced admirably; and was the best player at battledoor and shuttlecock, hunt-the-slipper and blind-man's-buff, in the county. Nothing could exceed the glee with which, in any family where she was intimate, she would join the children in a game of romps, herself the gayest and happiest child of the party.

For cards she had no genius. Even the noise and nonsense of a round-table could not reconcile her to those bits of painted pasteboard; this was unlucky: it is true that the General, who played a good rubber, and looked upon it, next to a review or a battle, as the most serious business of life, and who had, moreover, a settled opinion that no woman had intellect enough to master the game, would hardly have wished to have been her partner at the whist-table; but he also loved a snug party at piquet, just to keep him awake after dinner, and would have liked exceedingly that Mrs. Sanford should have known enough of the rules to become a decent antagonist. He was not unreasonable in his expectations, he did not desire that she should play well enough to win. He only wanted her to understand sufficient of the game to lose in a creditable manner. But it would not do: she was unconquerably stupid; never dealt the right number of cards; never showed her point; was ignorant even of the common terms of the art; did not know a quart from a quint, or a pique from a repique; could not tell when she was capotted. There was no comfort in beating her; so the poor General was fain to accept his old Brigade-Major as a substitute, who gave him three points and beat him.

In other respects, she was an excellent wife; gentle, affectionate, and sweet-tempered. She accommodated herself admirably to all

the General's ways; listened to his admonitions with deference, and to his stories with attention — the formidable one, beginning, "when I was in Antigua," not excepted; was kind to the old Brigade-Major; and when he, a confirmed old bachelor, joined his patron in certain dissertations on the natural inferiority of the sex, heard them patiently, and if she smiled, took good care they should not find her out.

To be sure, her carelessness did occasionally get her husband into a scrape. Once, for instance, he, being inspecting certain corps twenty miles off, she undertook to bring his dress clothes, for the purpose of attending a ball given in his honour, and forgot his new inexpressibles, thereby putting the poor General to the trouble and expense of sending an express after the missing garment, and keeping him a close prisoner till midnight, in expectation of the return of his messenger. Another time, he being in London, and the trusty Major also absent, she was commissioned to inform him of the day fixed for a grand review; sate down for the purpose; wrote a long letter full of chit-chat—and he could not abide long letters; never mentioned military affairs; and being reminded of her omission, crammed the important intelligence into a crossed postscript under the seal, which the General, with his best spectacles, could not have deciphered in a month! so that the unlucky commander never made his appearance on the ground, and but for a forty years' reputation for exactness and punctuality, which made any excuse look like truth, would have fallen into sad disgrace at head-quarters.

In process of time, however, even these little errors ceased. She grew tall, and her mind developed itself with her person; still lively, ardent and mercurial in her temperament, with an untiring spirit of life and motion, and a passionate love of novelty and gaiety, her playfulness ripened into intelligence, her curiosity became rational, and her delight in the country deepened into an intense feeling of the beauties of nature. Thrown amidst a large and varying circle, she became, in every laudable sense of the phrase, a perfect woman of the world. Before a change in the volunteer system, and a well-merited promotion took the General from B., she had learned to manage her town visits and her country visits, to arrange *soirées* and dinner parties, to give balls, and to plan picnics, and was the life and charm of the neighbourhood. I would not even be sure that she had not learned piquet; for lovely as she was, and many as there were to tell her that she was lovely, her husband was always her first object; and her whole conduct seemed guided by the spirit of that beautiful line in the most beautiful of ballads:

For auld Robin Gray 's been a gude man to me.

Since his death — for she has been long a widow—Lady Sanford—have I not said that the good General became Sir Thomas before his decease! — has lived mostly on the continent: indulging, but always with the highest reputation, her strong taste for what is gayest in artificial life and grandest in natural scenery. I have heard of her sometimes amongst the brilliant crowds of the Roman carnival, sometimes amidst the wildest recesses of the Pyrenees; now looking down the crater of Vesuvius; now waltzing at a court ball at Vienna. She has made a trip to Athens, and has talked of attempting the ascent of Mont Blanc! At present she is in England; for a friend of mine saw her the other day at the Cowes regatta, full of life and glee, almost as pretty as ever, and quite as delightful. Of course, being also a well-dowered and childless widow, she has had lovers by the hundred, and offers by the score; but she always says that she has made up her mind not to marry again, and I have no doubt of her keeping her resolution. She loves her liberty too dearly to part with the blessing; and well as she got on with Sir Thomas, I think she has had enough of matrimony. Besides, she has now reached a sedate age, and there would be a want of discretion, which hitherto she never has wanted, in venturing ——

"What was that you said, ma'am? The newspaper! Have I read the newspaper? — People will always talk to me when I am writing!—Have I read to-day's paper? No; what do you wish me to look at? This column: Police reports — new publications — births? — oh, the marriages! 'Yesterday, at Bow Church, Mr. Smith to Miss Brown.' Not that? Oh! the next!—'On Friday last, at Cheltenham, by the Venerable the Archdeacon P——, Dennis O'Brien, Esq., of the —th regiment.'—But what do I care for Dennis O'Brien, Esq.? 'What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba?' I never heard of the gentleman before in my days. Oh! it's the lady; 'Dennis O'Brien, Esq. to Lady Sanford'— 'Angels and ministers of grace defend us! here is a surprise!—'to Lady Sanford!' Ay, my eyes did not deceive me, it's no mistake; 'relict of the late Major-General Sir Thomas Sanford, K. C. B.' And so much for a widow's resolution! and a gay widow's too! I would not have answered for one of the demure. A General's widow at the ripe age of forty (oh, age of indiscretion!) married to an ensign in a marching regiment; young enough to be her son, I warrant me; and as poor as a church mouse! If her old husband could but know what was going forward, he would chuckle in his grave, at so notable a proof of the weakness of the sex—so irresistible a confirmation of his theory. Lady Sanford married again! Who, after this, shall put faith in woman? Lady Sanford married again!

GOING TO THE RACES.

A MEMORABLE day was the third of last June to Mary and Henrietta Coxe, the young daughters of Simon Coxe the carpenter of Aberleigh, for it was the first day of Ascot Races, and the first time of their going to that celebrated union of sport and fashion. There is no pleasure so great in the eyes of our country damsels as a jaunt to Ascot. In the first place, it is, when you get there, a genuine English amusement, open alike to rich and poor, elegant as an opera, and merry as a fair; in the second, this village of Aberleigh is situate about fourteen miles from the course, just within distance, almost out of distance, so that there is commonly enough of suspense and difficulty—the slight difficulty, the short suspense, which add such zest to pleasure; finally, at Ascot you are sure to see the King, to see him in his graciousness and his dignity, the finest gentleman in Europe, the greatest sovereign of the world. Truly it is nothing extraordinary that his liege subjects should flock to indulge their feelings of loyalty by the sight of such a monarch, and that the announcement of his presence should cover a barren heath with a dense and crowded population of all ranks and all ages, from the duchess to the gipsy, from the old man of eighty to the child in its mother's arms.

All people love Ascot Races; but our country lasses love them above all. It is their favourite wedding jaunt, for half our young couples are married in the race week, and one or two matches have seemed to me got up purposely for the occasion; and of all the attentions that can be offered by a lover, a drive to the Races is the most irresistible. In short, so congenial is that gay scene to love, that it is a moot point which are most numerous, the courtships that conclude there in the shape of bridal excursions, or those which begin on that favoured spot in the shape of parties of pleasure; and the delicate experiment called "popping the question," is so often put in practice on the very course itself, that when Robert Hewitt, the young farmer at the Holt, asked Master Coxe's permission to escort his daughters, not only the good carpenter, but his neighbours the blacksmith and the shoemaker, looked on this mark of rustic gallantry as the precursor of a declaration in form; and all the village cried out on Hetta Coxe's extreme good luck, Hetta being supposed, and with some reason, to be the chief object of his attention.

Robert Hewitt was a young farmer of the old school, honest, frugal, and industrious; thrifty, thriving, and likely to thrive; one of a fine yeomanly spirit, not ashamed of his station, and fond of following the habits of his forefathers, sowing his own corn, driving his own team, and occasionally ploughing his own land. As proud, perhaps, of his blunt speech and homely ways as some of his brother farmers of their superior refinement and gentility. Nothing could exceed the scorn with which Robert Hewitt, in his market-cart, drawn by his good horse Dobbin, would look down on one neighbour on his hunter, and another in his gig. To the full as proud as any of them was Robert, but in a different way, and perhaps a safer. He piqued himself, like a good Englishman, on wearing a smock frock, smoking his pipe, and hating foreigners, to our intercourse with whom he was wont to ascribe all the airs and graces, the new fashions, and the effeminacy, which annoyed him in his own countrymen. He hated the French, he detested dandies, and he abhorred fine ladies, fine ways, and finery of any sort. Such was Robert Hewitt.

Henrietta Coxe was a pretty girl of seventeen, and had passed the greater part of her life with an aunt in the next town, who had been a lady's maid in her youth, and had retired thither on a small annuity. To this aunt, who had been dead about a twelvemonth, she was indebted for a name, rather too fine for common wear—I believe she wrote herself Henrietta-Matilda; a large wardrobe, pretty much in the same predicament; and an abundant stock of superfine notions, some skill in mantua-making and millinery, and a legacy of a hundred pounds to be paid on her wedding-day. Her beauty was quite in the style of a wax doll: blue eyes, flaxen hair, delicate features, and a pink and white complexion, much resembling that sweet pea which is known by the name of the painted lady. Very pretty she was certainly, with all her airs and graces; and very pretty, in spite of her airs and graces, did Robert Hewitt think her; and love, who delights in contrasts, and has an especial pleasure in oversetting wise resolutions, and bending the haughty self-will of the lords of the creation, was beginning to make strange havoc in the stout yeoman's heart. His operations, too, found a very unintentional coadjutrix in old Mrs. Hewitt, who, taking alarm at her son's frequent visits to the carpenter's shop, unwarily expressed a hope that if her son did intend to marry one of the Coxes, he would have nothing to do with the fine lady, but would choose Mary, the elder sister, a dark-haired, pleasant-looking young woman of two-and-twenty, who kept the house as clean as a palace, and was the boast of the village for industry and good-humour. Now this unlucky caution gave Robert, who loved his mother, but did not choose to be managed by her, an additional motive for his lurking preference, by piquing his self-will; add to which, the little damsel herself, in the absence of other admirers, took visible pleasure in his admiration; so that affairs seemed drawing to a crisis, and the party to Ascot appeared likely to end like other jaunts to the same place, in

a wedding. It is true that the invitation, which had been readily and gratefully accepted by her sister, had been received by Miss Hetta with some little demur. "Going to the Races was delightful! but to ride in a cart behind Dobbin was odious. Could not Mr. Hewitt hire a phaeton, or borrow a gig? However, as her sister seemed to wish it, she might perhaps go, if she could find no better conveyance." And with this concession the lover was contented; the more especially as the destined finery was in active preparation. Flounces, furbelows, and frippery of all descriptions, enough to stock a milliner's shop, did Hetta produce for the adornment of her fair person; and Robert looked on in silence, sometimes thinking how pretty she would look; sometimes, how soon he would put an end to such nonsense when once they were married; and sometimes, how odd a figure he and Dobbin should cut by the side of so much beauty and fashion.

Neither Dobbin nor his master were fated to be so honoured. The evening before the Races, there happened to be a revel at Whitley Wood: thither Hetta repaired; and there she had the ill fortune to be introduced to Monsieur Auguste, a young Frenchman, who had lately hired a room at B. where he vended eau de Cologne and French toys and essences, and did himself the honour, as his bills expressed, to cut the hair and the corns of the nobility and gentry of the town and neighbourhood. Monsieur was a dark, sallow, foreign-looking personage, with tremendous whiskers, who looked at once fierce and foppish, was curled and perfumed in a manner that did honour to his double profession, and wore gold rings in his ears and on his fingers, a huge bunch of seals at his side, and a gaudy brooch at his bosom. Small chance had Robert Hewitt against such a rival, especially when, smitten with her beauty or her hundred pounds, he devoted himself to Hetta's service, made fine speeches in most bewitching broken English, braved for her sake the barbarities of a country dance, and promised to initiate her into the mysteries of the waltz and the quadrille; and, finally, requested the honour to conduct her in a cabriolet, the next day, to Ascot Races. Small chance had our poor farmer against such a Monsieur.

The morning arrived, gloomy, showery, and cold, and at the appointed hour up drove the punctual Robert, in a new market-cart, painted blue with red wheels, and his heavy but handsome horse Dobbin (who was indeed upon occasion the fore horse of the team), as sleek and shining as good feed and good dressing could make him. Up drove Robert with his little sister (a child of eleven years old, who was to form one of the party) sitting at his side; whilst equally punctual, at Master Coxe's door, stood the sisters ready dressed, Mary in a new dark gown, a handsome shawl, and a pretty straw bonnet, with a cloth cloak hanging on her arm; Hetta in a flutter of gauze and ribbons, pink and green, and yellow and blue, looking like a parrot tulip, or a milliner's doll, or a picture of the fashions in the Lady's Magazine, or like any thing under the sun but an English country girl. Robert looked at her and then at Mary, who was vainly endeavouring to persuade her to put on, or at least to take, a cloak, and thought for once without indignation of his mother's advice; he got out, however, and was preparing to assist them into the cart, when suddenly, to the astonishment of every body but Hetta, for she had said nothing at home of her encounter at the revel, Monsieur Auguste made his appearance in a hired gig of the most wretched description, drawn by an equally miserable jade, alighted at the house and claimed Mademoiselle's promise to do him the honour to accompany him in his cabriolet. The consternation was general. Mary remonstrated with her sister mildly but earnestly; Master Coxe swore she should not go; but Hetta was resolute; and farmer Hewitt, whose first impulse had been to drub the Frenchman, changed his purpose when he saw how willing she was to be carried off. "Let her go," said he, "Monsieur is welcome to her company; for my part, I think they are well matched. It would be a pity to part them." And lifting Mary rapidly into the cart, he drove off at a pace of which Dobbin, to judge from his weight, appeared incapable, and to which that illustrious steed was very little accustomed.

In the mean while Hetta was endeavouring to introduce her new beau to her father, and to reconcile him to her change of escort; and the standers-by, consisting of half the men and boys in the village, were criticising the Frenchman's equipage: "I could shake the old chaise to pieces with one jerk, it 's so ramshackle," cried Ned Jones, Master Coxe's foreman. "The wheel will come to pieces long before they get to Ascot," added Sam the apprentice. "The old horse has a spavin in the off fore-leg, that 's what makes him so lame," said Will Ford the blacksmith. "And he has been down within the month. Look at his knees!" rejoined Jem the carter. "He's blind of an eye," exclaimed one urchin. "He shies," cried another. "The reins are rotten," observed Dick the collarmaker. "The Frenchman can't drive," remarked Jack the drover, coming up to join the crew; "he 'd as nearly as possible run foul of my pigs." "He 'll certainly overturn her, poor thing," cried one kind friend, as overcome by her importunities her father at length consented to her departure. "The chaise will break down," said another. "Break! he 'll break her neck," added a third. "They'll be drenched to the skin in this shower," exclaimed a fourth;—and amidst these consoling predictions the happy couple departed.

Robert and Mary, on their side, proceeded for some time in almost total silence! Robert too angry for speech, and Mary feeling herself, however innocent, involved in the consequences of her sister's delinquency; so that little passed beyond Anne Hewitt's delightful remarks on the beauty of the country, and the hedge-rows, bright with the young leaves of the oak, and gay with the pearly thorn-blossoms and the delicate briar rose; and her occasional exclamations at the sudden appearance of some tiny wren, or the peculiar interrupted flight of some water-wagtail, as he threw himself forward, then rested for a moment, self-poised in the air, then started on again with an up-and-down motion, like a ball tossed from the hand, keeping by the side of the cart for half a mile or more, as is frequently the way with that sociable bird. Little passed beyond trifles such as these, until Robert turned suddenly round to his companion with the abrupt question: "Pray, Miss Mary, do you like Frenchmen?" "I never was acquainted with any," replied Mary; "but I think I should like Englishmen best. It seems natural to prefer one's own countrymen." "Ay, to be sure," replied Robert, "to be sure it is! You are a sensible girl, Mary Coxe; and a good girl. It would be well for your sister if she had some of your sense." "Hetta is a good girl, I assure you, Farmer Hewitt; a very good girl," rejoined Mary, warmly, "and does not want sense. But only consider how young she is, and her having no mother, and being a little spoilt by my poor aunt, and so pretty, and every body talking nonsense to her, no wonder that she should sometimes be a little wrong, as she was this morning. But I hope that we shall meet her on the course, and that all will go right again. Hetta is a good girl, and will make a good wife." "To a Frenchman," replied Robert, drily; and the conversation turned to other subjects, and was kept up with cheerfulness and good-humour till they reached Ascot.

Anne and Mary enjoyed the races much. They saw the line of carriages, nine deep—more carriages than they thought ever were built; and the people—more people than they thought the whole world could hold; had a confused view of the horses, and a distinct one of the riders' jackets; and Anne, whose notions on the subject of racing had been rather puzzled, so far enlarged her knowledge and improved her mind as to comprehend that yellow, crimson, green, and blue, in short, all the colours of the rainbow, were trying which should come first to the winning-post; they saw punch, a puppet-show, several peep-shows, and the dancing-dogs; admired the matchless display of beauty and elegance when the weather allowed the ladies to walk up and down the course; were amused at the bustle and hurry-scurry, when a sudden shower drove them to the shelter of their carriages; saw the Duke of Wellington; had a merry nod from the lively boy, Prince George; and had the honour of sharing, with some thousands of his subjects, a most graceful bow and most gracious smile from his Majesty. In short, they had seen every thing and every body, except Hetta and her beau; and nothing had been wanting to Mary's gratification, but the assurance of her sister's safety; for Mary had that prime qualification for a sight-seer, the habit of thinking much of what she came to see and little of herself. She made light of all inconveniences, covered little Anne (a delicate child) with her own cloak during the showers, and contrived, in spite of Robert's gallant attention to his guest, that Anne should have the best place under the umbrella, and the most tempting portion of the provisions; so that our farmer, by no means wanting in moral taste, was charmed with her cheerfulness, her good-humour, and the total absence of vanity and selfishness; and when, on her ascending the cart to return, he caught a glimpse of a pretty foot and ankle, and saw how much exercise and pleasure had heightened her complexion and brightened her hazel eyes, he could not help thinking to himself, "My mother was right. She's ten times handsomer than her sister, and has twenty times more sense,—and, besides, she does not like Frenchmen."

But where could Hetta be? what had become of poor Hetta? This question, which had pressed so frequently on Mary's mind during the Races, became still more painful as they proceeded on their road home, which, leading through cross country lanes, far away from the general throng of the visiters, left more leisure for her affectionate fears. They had driven about two miles, and Robert was endeavouring to comfort her with hopes that their horse's lameness had forced them back again, and that her sister would be found safe at Aberleigh, when a sudden turn in the lane discovered a disabled gig, without a horse or driver, in the middle of the road, and a woman seated on a bank by the side of a ditch—a miserable object, tattered, dirty, shivering, drenched, and crying as if her heart would break. Was it, could it be Hetta? Yes, Hetta it was. All the misfortunes that had been severally predicted at their outset had befallen the unfortunate pair. Before they had travelled three miles, their wretched horse had fallen lame in his near fore-leg, and had cast the off hind-shoe, which, as the blacksmith of the place was gone to the Races, and nobody seemed willing to put himself out of the way to oblige a Frenchman, had nearly stopped them at the beginning of their expedition. At last, however, they met with a man who undertook to shoe their steed, and whose want of skill added a prick to their other calamities; then Monsieur Auguste

broke a shaft of the cabriolet by driving against a post, the setting and bandaging of which broken limb made another long delay; then came a pelting shower, during which they were forced to stand under a tree; when they lost their way, and owing to the people of whom Monsieur inquired not understanding his English, and Monsieur not understanding theirs, went full five miles round about; then they arrived at the Chequers public house, which no effort could induce their horse to pass, so there they stopped perforce to bait and feed; then, when they were getting on as well as could be expected of a horse with three lame legs and a French driver, a wagon came past them, carried away their wheel, threw Monsieur Auguste into the hedge, and lodged Miss Henrietta in the ditch; so now the beau was gone to the next village for assistance, and the belle was waiting his return on the bank. Poor Hetta was evidently tired of her fine lover and the manifold misadventures which his unlucky gallantry had brought upon her, and accepted very thankfully the offer which Anne and Mary made, and Robert did not oppose, of taking her into the cart, and leaving a line written in pencil on a leaf of Mary's pocket-book, to inform Monsieur of her safety. Heartily glad was poor Hetta to find herself behind the good steed Dobbin, under cover of her sister's warm cloak, pitied and comforted, and in a fair way to get home. Heartily glad would she have been, too, to have found herself reinstated in the good graces of her old admirer. But of that she saw no sign. Indeed, the good yeoman took some pains to show that, although he bore no malice, his courtship was over. He goes, however, oftener than ever to the carpenter's house; and the gossips of Aberleigh say that this jaunt to Ascot will have its proper and usual catastrophe, a merry wedding; that Robert Hewitt will be the happy bridegroom, but that Hetta Coxe will not be the bride.

THE CHINA JUG.

One of the prettiest rustic dwellings in our pretty neighbourhood, is the picturesque farm-house which stands on the edge of Wokefield Common, so completely in a bottom, that the passengers who traverse the high road see indeed the smoke from the chimneys floating like a vapour over the woody hill which forms the back ground, but cannot even catch a glimpse of the roof, so high does the turfy common rise above it; whilst so steeply does the ground decline to the door, that it seems as if no animal less accustomed to tread the hill-side than a goat or a chamois could venture to descend the narrow footpath which winds round the declivity, and forms the nearest way to the village. The cart-track, thridding the mazes of the hills, leads to the house by a far longer but very beautiful road; the smooth fine turf of the Common varied by large tufts of furze and broom rising in an abrupt bank on one side, on the other a narrow well-timbered valley, bordered by hanging woods, and terminated by a large sheet of water, close beside which stands the farm, a low irregular cottage snugly thatched, and its different out-buildings, all on the smallest scale, but giving the air of comfort and habitation to the spot that nothing can so thoroughly convey as an English barn-yard with its complement of cows, pigs, horses, chickens, and children.

One part of the way thither is singularly beautiful. It is where a bright and sparkling spring has formed itself into a clear pond in a deep broken hollow by the road-side: the bank all around covered with rich grass, and descending in unequal terraces to the pool: whilst on every side around it, and at different heights, stand ten or twelve noble elms, casting their green shadows mixed with the light clouds and the blue summer sky on the calm and glassy water, and giving, (especially when the evening sun lights up the little grove, causing the rugged trunks to shine like gold, and the pendent leaves to glitter like the burnished wings of the rose beetle,) a sort of pillared and columnar dignity to the scene.

Seldom too would that fountain, famous for the purity and sweetness of its waters, be without some figure suited to the landscape; child, woman, or country girl, leaning from the plank extended over the spring, to fill her pitcher, or returning with it, supported by one arm on her head, recalling all classical and pastoral images, the beautiful sculptures of Greece, the poetry of Homer and of Sophocles, and even more than these, the habits of oriental life, and the Rachels and Rebeccas of Scripture.

Seldom would that spring be without some such figure ascending the turfy steps into the lane, of whom one might inquire respecting the sequestered farm-house, whose rose-covered porch was seen so prettily from a turn in the road; and often it would be one of the farmer's children who would answer you; for in spite of the vicinity of the great pond, all the water for domestic use was regularly brought from the Elmin Spring.

Wokefield-Pond Farm was a territory of some thirty acres; one of the "little bargains," as they are called, which once abounded, but are now seldom found, in Berkshire; and at the time to which our story refers, that is to say, about twenty years ago, its inhabitants were amongst the poorest and most industrious people in the country.

George Mearing was the only son of a rich yeoman in the parish, who held this "little bargain" in addition to the manor farm.

George was an honest, thoughtless, kind-hearted, good-humoured lad, quite unlike his father, who, shrewd, hard, and money-getting, often regretted his son's deficiency in the qualities by which he had risen in the world, and reserved all his favour and affection for one who possessed them in full perfection,—his only daughter, Martha. Martha was a dozen years older than her brother, with a large bony figure, a visage far from prepossessing, a harsh voice, and a constitutional scold, which, scrupulous in her cleanliness, and vigilant in her economy, was in full activity all day long. She seemed to go about the house for no other purpose than that of finding fault, maundering now at one, and now at another,—her brother, the carters, the odd boy, the maid,—every one, in short, except her father, who, connecting the ideas of scolding and good housewifery, thought that he gained or at least saved money by the constant exercise of this accomplishment, and listened to her accordingly with great delight and admiration; "her mother," thought he to himself, "was a clever managing woman, and sorry enough was I to lose her; but gracious me, she was nothing to Martha! where she spoke one word, Martha speaks ten."

The rest of the family heard this eternal din with far less complacency. They agreed, indeed, that she could not help scolding, that it was her way, and that they were all fools to take notice of it; but yet they would flee, one and all, before the outpouring of her wrath, like birds before a thunder shower.

The person on whom the storm fell oftenest and loudest was of course her own immediate subject, the maid; and of the many damsels who had undergone the discipline of Martha's tongue, none was ever more the object of her objurgation, or deserved it less, than Dinah Moore. But Dinah had many sins in her stern mistress's eye, which would hardly have been accounted such elsewhere. In the first place she was young and pretty, and to youth and beauty Martha had strong objections; then she was somewhat addicted to rustic finery, especially in the article of pink top-knots,—and to rosy ribbons Martha had almost as great an aversion as to rosy cheeks; then again the young lass had a spirit, and when unjustly accused would vindicate herself with more wit than prudence, and better-tempered persons than Martha cannot abide that qualification; moreover the little damsel had an irresistible lightness of heart, and a gaiety of temper, which no rebuke could tame, no severity repress; laughter was as natural to her, as chiding to her mistress; all her labours went merrily on: she would sing over the mashing tub, and smile through the washing week, out-singing Martha's scolding, and out-smiling Martha's frowns.

This in itself would have been sufficient cause of offence: but when Martha fancied, and fancied truly, that the pink top-knots, the smiles, and the songs were all aimed at the heart of her brother George, of whom, in her own rough way, she was both fond and proud, the pretty songstress became insupportable: and when George in despite of her repeated warnings, did actually one fine morning espouse Dinah Moore, causing her in her agitation to let fall an old-fashioned china wash-hand bason, the gift of a long-deceased god-mother, which, with the jug belonging to it, she valued more than any other of her earthly possessions; no wonder that she made a vow never to speak to her brother whilst she lived, or that more in resentment than in covetousness (for Martha Mearing was rather a harsh and violent, than an avaricious woman) she encouraged her father in his angry resolution of banishing the culprit from his house, and disinheriting him from his property.

Old Farmer Mearing was not, however, a wicked man, although in many respects a hard one. He did not turn his son out to starve: on the contrary, he settled him in the Pond Farm, with a decent though scanty plenishing, put twenty pounds in his pocket, and told him that he had nothing more to expect from him, and that he must make his own way in the world as he had done forty years before.

George's heart would have sunk under this renunciation, for he was of a kind but weak and indolent nature, and wholly accustomed to depend on his father, obey his orders, and rely on him for support; but he was sustained by the bolder and firmer spirit of his wife, who, strong, active, lively and sanguine, finding herself for the first time in her life, her own mistress, in possession of a comfortable home, and married to the man of her heart, saw nothing but sunshine before them. Dinah had risen in the world, and George had fallen; and this circumstance, in addition to an original difference of temperament, may sufficiently account for their difference of feeling.

During the first year or two, Dinah's prognostics seemed likely to be verified. George ploughed and sowed and reaped, and she made butter, reared poultry, and fatted pigs: and their industry prospered, and the world went well with the young couple. But a bad harvest, the death of their best cow, the lameness of their most serviceable horse, and more than all, perhaps, the birth of four little girls in four successive years, crippled them sadly, and brought poverty and the fear of poverty to their happy fire-side.

Still, however, Dinah's spirit continued undiminished. Her children, although, to use her own phrase, "of the wrong sort," grew and flourished, as the children of poor people do grow and flourish, one hardly knows how; and by the time that the long-wished-for boy made his appearance in the world, the elder girls had become almost as useful to their fa-

ther as if they had been "of the right sort" themselves. Never were seen such hardy little elves! They drove the plough, tended the kine, folded the sheep, fed the pigs, worked in the garden, made the hay, hoed the turnips, reaped the corn, hacked the beans, and drove the market-cart to B—— on occasion, and sold the butter, eggs, and poultry as well as their mother could have done.

Strong, active, and serviceable as boys were the little lasses; and pretty with all, though as brown as so many gipsies, and as untrained as wild coats. They had their mother's bright and sparkling countenance, and her gay and sunny temper, a heritage more valuable than house or land,—a gift more precious than ever was bestowed on a favoured princess by beneficent fairy. But the mother's darling was one who bore no resemblance to her either in mind or person, her only son and youngest child Moses, so called after his grandfather, in a lurking hope, which was however disappointed, that the name might propitiate the offended and wealthy yeoman.

Little Moses was a fair, mild, quiet boy, who seemed at first sight far fitter to wear petticoats than any one of his madcap sisters; but there was an occasional expression in his deep grey eye that gave token of sense and spirit, and an unfailing steadiness and diligence about the child that promised to vindicate his mother's partiality. She was determined that Moses should be, to use the country phrase, "a good scholar;" the meaning of which is, by the way, not a little dissimilar from that which the same words bear at Oxford or at Cambridge. Poor Dinah was no "scholar" herself, as the parish register can testify, where her mark stands below George's signature in the record of her marriage; and the girls bade fair to emulate their mother's ignorance, Dinah having given to each of the four the half of a year's schooling, upon the principle of ride and tie, little Lucy going one day, and little Patty the next, and so on with the succeeding pair; in this way adroitly educating two children for the price of one, their mother in her secret soul holding it for girls a waste of time. But when Moses came in question, the case was altered. He was destined to enjoy the benefit of an entire education, and to imbibe unshared all the learning that the parish pedagogue could bestow. An admission to the Wokefield free-school ensured him this advantage, together with the right of wearing the long primitive blue cloth coat and leathern girdle, as well as the blue cap and yellow tassel by which the boys were distinguished; and by the time he was eight years old, he had made such progress in the arts of writing and ciphering, that he was pronounced by the master to be the most promising pupil in the school.

At this period, misfortunes, greater than they had hitherto known, began to crowd around his family. Old Farmer Mearing died, leaving all his property to Martha; and George, a broken-hearted toil-worn man, who had been only supported in his vain efforts to make head against ill-fortune by the hope of his father's at last relenting, followed him to the grave in less than two months. Debt and difficulty beset the widow, and even her health and spirits began to fail. Her only resource seemed to be to leave her pleasant home, give up every thing to the creditors, get her girls out to service, and try to maintain herself and Moses by washing or charing, or whatever work her failing strength would allow her to perform.

Martha, or as she was now called, Mrs. Martha, lived on in lonely and apparently comfortless affluence at the Manor Farm. She had taken no notice of Dinah's humble supplications, sent injudiciously by Patty, a girl whose dark and sparkling beauty exactly resembled what her mother had been before her unfortunate marriage; but on Moses, so like his father, she had been seen to gaze wistfully and tenderly, when the little procession of charity boys passed her on their way to church: though on finding herself observed, or perhaps on detecting herself in such an indulgence, the softened eye was immediately withdrawn, and the stern spirit seemed to gather itself into a resolution only the stronger for its momentary weakness.

Mrs. Martha, now long past the middle of life, and a confirmed old maid, had imbibed a few of the habits and peculiarities which are supposed, and perhaps justly, to characterise that condition. Amongst other things she had a particular fancy for the water from the Elmin spring, and could not relish her temperate supper if washed down by any other beverage; and she was accustomed to fetch it herself in the identical china jug, the present of her godmother, the bason belonging to which she had broken from the shock she underwent when hearing of George's wedding. It is even possible, so much are we the creatures of association, that the constant sight of this favourite piece of porcelain, which was really of very curious and beautiful Nankin china, might, by perpetually reminding her of her loss, and the occasion, serve to confirm her inveterate aversion to poor George and his family.

However this might be, it chanced that one summer evening Mrs. Martha sallied forth to fetch the sparkling draught from the Elmin spring. She filled her jug as usual, but much rain had fallen, and the dame, no longer so active as she had been, slipped when about to re-ascend the bank with her burthen, and found herself compelled either to throw herself forward and grasp the trunk of the nearest tree, to the imminent peril of her china jug, of which she was compelled to let go, or to slide back to the already tottering and slippery

plank, at the risk, almost the certainty, of plunging head foremost into the water. If Mrs. Martha had been asked, on level ground and out of danger, whether she preferred to be soused in her own person, or to break her china jug, she would, most undoubtedly, theoretically have chosen the ducking; but theory and practice are different matters, and following the instinct of self-preservation, she let the dear mug go, and clung to the tree.

As soon as she was perfectly safe she began to lament, in her usual vituperative strain, over her irreparable loss, scolding the tottering plank and the slippery bank, and finally, there being no one else to bear the blame, her own heedless haste, which had cost her the commodity she valued most in the world. Swinging herself round, however, still supported by the tree, she had the satisfaction to perceive that the dear jug was not yet either sunken or broken. It rested most precariously on a tuft of bulrushes towards the centre of the pool, in instant danger of both these calamities, and, indeed, appeared to her to be visibly sinking under its own weight. What could she do? She could never reach it; and whilst she went to summon assistance, the precious porcelain would vanish. What could she do?

Just as she was asking herself this question, she had the satisfaction to hear footsteps in the lane. She called; and a small voice was heard singing, and the little man Moses with his satchel at his back, made his appearance, returning from school. He had not heard her, and she would not call him — not even to preserve her china treasure. Moses, however, saw the dilemma, and pausing only to pull off his coat, plunged into the water, to rescue the sinking cup.

The summer had been wet, and the pool was unusually high, and Mrs. Martha, startled to perceive that he was almost immediately beyond his depth, called him earnestly and vehemently to return. The resolute boy, however, accustomed from infancy to dabble like the young water-fowl amidst the sedges and islets of the great pond, was not to be frightened by the puny waters of the Elmin spring. He reached, though at some peril, the tuft of bulrushes — brought the jug triumphantly to land — washed it — filled it at the fountain-head, and finally offered it, with his own sweet and gracious smile, to Mrs. Martha. And she — oh! what had she not suffered during the last few moments, whilst the poor orphan — her brother George's only boy, was risking his life to preserve for her a paltry bit of earthenware! What had she not felt during those few but long moments! Her woman's heart melted within her; and instead of seizing the precious porcelain, she caught the dripping boy in her arms — half-smothered him with kisses, and vowed that her home should be his home, and her fortune his fortune.

And she kept her word,—she provided amply and kindly for Dinah and her daughters; but Moses is her heir, and he lives at the Manor Farm, and is married to the prettiest woman in the county; and Mrs. Martha has betaken herself to the Pond-side, with a temper so much ameliorated, that the good farmer declares the greatest risk his children run is, of being spoilt by aunt Martha: — one in particular, her godson, who has inherited the name and the favour of his father, and is her own especial little Moses.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

TOM HOPKINS.

They who knew the little town of Cranley some thirty years ago, must needs remember Tom Hopkins, the loudest, if not the greatest man in the place, and one of the most celebrated sportsmen in that sporting neighbourhood, which he had honoured with his residence for a longer time than he — still in the prime of life, and as tenacious of his pretensions to youth as a fading beauty — cared to hear tell of. Tom, whose family was none of the most illustrious, his ancestors having been from time immemorial grocers in the town, had had the good luck, before he was out of petticoats, to take the fancy of a rich relation, a grand-aunt, who, captivated as grand-aunts are wont to be, by a happy union of prettiness and mischief, rosy cheeks and naughty tricks, the usual merits of a spoilt child, installed the chubby-faced Pickle into the post of present pet, and future heir, — sent him to school at her own expense, and declared her intention to make a gentleman of him in proper time,— a prospect which, as her hopeful grand-nephew happily conceived the immunities and privileges of gentility to consist of idleness and field-sports, proved sufficiently delightful to reconcile him to the previous formality of learning "small Latin and less Greek," and bore him safely through the forms, with no less reputation than that of being the greatest dunce that ever quitted the school. When that happy time arrived, however, there was some difference of opinion as to his destination, Tom having set his heart on one mode of killing, whilst his grand-aunt had decided on another. "I will be a soldier," cried Tom, already enamoured of the art of gunnery. "You shall be an apothecary," replied aunt Deborah, equally devoted to the draught and the pill. Physic and arms fought a pitched battle, and long and obstinate was the contest; there was even some danger that the dispute might have ended in disinheritance, to the probable benefit of the county hospital, when a discreet friend prudently suggested

the possibility of uniting the two modes of putting people out of the world, and Tom consented to don the apron and sleeves and become *un garçon apothicaire*, under promise of flourishing at some future period as an army surgeon—a promise which, though not kept to the letter, was at least so far realized as to make him a surgeon of militia, and obtain for him the enviable privilege of wearing a red coat, and meddling with fire-arms. These delights, however ecstatic, soon lost their gloss and their novelty; Tom speedily discovered that hunting and shooting were his real vocation; and aunt Deborah happening to die and to leave him a comfortable independence, he retired from the service, after one winter spent in country quarters, returned to his native town, built himself a house, set up an establishment, consisting of a couple of hunters, a brace of pointers, a servant lad, and an old woman, and began to make war on the hares, foxes, pheasants, partridges, and other *feræ naturæ*, under the character of a sportsman, which he filled with eminent ability and success, being universally reckoned one of the boldest riders and best shots in the county.

At the time of which I speak, he was of an age somewhat equivocal; public fame called him forty, whilst he himself stuck obstinately at thirty-two; of a stout active figure, rather manly than gentlemanly, and a bold jovial visage, in excellent keeping with his person, distinguished by round bright stupid black eyes, an aquiline nose, a knowing smile, and a general comely vulgarity of aspect. His voice was hoarse and deep, his manner bluff and blunt, and his conversation loud and boisterous. With all these natural impediments to good company, the lowness of his origin recent in their memories, and the flagrant fact of his residence in a country town, staring them in the face, Mr. Tom Hopkins made his way into almost every family of consideration in the neighbourhood. Sportmanship, sheer sportmanship, the qualification that, more than any other, commands the respect of your great English landholder, surmounted every obstacle. There was not a man in the * * shire hunt who fenced so well, or went so fast over a country; and every table in the county was open to so eminent a personage.

With the ladies, he made his way by different qualities; in the first place he was a character, an oddity; and the audacity of his vulgarity was tolerated, where a man only half as boisterous would have been scouted; then he was gallant in his way, affected, perhaps felt, a great devotion to the sex, and they were half amused, half pleased, with the rough flattery which seemed, and probably was, so sincere. Then they liked, as all women like, his sturdiness of character, his boldness, his stanchness, and his zeal. He won Lady Frances's heart by canvassing for her husband in a contested election, during which he performed more riding, drinking, and roaring, told more lies and made more noise than any ten of the fee'd agents; he achieved the Countess's good graces by restoring her fat asthmatic lap-dog to health, appetite, and activity. N. B. As Mr. Thomas Hopkins took Chloe home to Cranley to be nursed, it is likely that the Abernethy system may fairly claim the merit of that cure;—and he even made a favourable impression on a young Marchioness, by riding to London, above seventy miles, in order to match a shade of netting silk, thereby winning a considerable wager against time of the Marquis. In short, Tom Hopkins was so general a favourite with the female world, that, but for three or four flat refusals, consequent on as many very presumptuous offers, he would certainly have fallen into the mistake of thinking he might marry whom he would. As it was, he kept his own counsel, only betraying his soreness by a transient avoidance of ladies' company, and a proneness to descant at the Hunt dinners on the comforts of a single state, and the manifold evils of matrimony.

His house was an ugly brick dwelling of his own erection, situate in the principal street of Cranley, and adorned with a green door and a brass knocker, giving entrance into a stone passage, which, there being no other way to the stable, served both for himself, and that very dear part of himself, his horses, whose dwelling was certainly far more commodious than their master's. His accommodations were simple enough. The dining-parlour, which might pass for his only sitting-room,—for the little dark den which he called his drawing-room was not entered three times a year,—the dining-parlour was a small square room, coloured pea-green with a gold moulding, adorned with a series of four prints on shooting, and four on hunting, together with two or three portraits of eminent racers, riders, hunters, and grooms. Guns and fishing-rods were suspended over the mantel-piece; powder-horns, shot-belts, and game-bags, scattered about; a choice collection of flies for angling lay in one corner, whips and bridles in another, and a pile of books and papers,—Colonel Thornton's Tour, Daniel's Rural Sports, and a heap of Racing Calendars, occupied a third; Ponto and Carlo lay basking on the hearth-rug, and a famous little cocking spaniel, Flora by name, a conscious favourite, was generally stretched in state on an arm-chair.

Here, except when the owner was absent on a sporting expedition, which, between fishing, shooting, hunting, and racing, did, it must be confessed, happen pretty often; here his friends were sure to find a hearty welcome, a good beef-steak (his old housekeeper was famous for cookery), and as much excellent port and super-excellent Madeira (Tom, like most of his school, eschewed claret and other thin potations) as their host could prevail on

them to swallow. Many a good fellow hath "heard the chimes at midnight" in this little room. Here Tom sate in his glory, telling interminable stories of his own exploits, and those of his dogs and horses; stories in every sense of the word, but yet as innocent as falsehoods well can be—in the first place, because they were always lies of vanity, not lies of malice, and could do harm to no creature upon earth;—in the second, because the orator being somewhat lengthy and prosy, his hearers were apt to be troubled with "the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking," and seldom knew what he was talking about. Moreover, having told fibs of this sort all his life, I don't think he could help it; I don't even believe that he knew when he did it, or that he could, to save his life, have separated the true from the false, in any one of his legends. He was incurable. It did not even hurt his conscience to be found out.

Such was Tom Hopkins; and such, allowing for the difference of thirty years, Tom Hopkins is still. Some changes are however observable in that gallant sportsman, such changes as thirty years are wont to bring. He sits somewhat heavier in the saddle, and mounts somewhat seldomer,—has well-nigh given up fishing and shooting,—has exchanged fox-hunting for coursing,—sold his hunters and purchased a staid roadster,—keeps a brace of greyhounds, of whose pedigree he vaunts much,—belongs to two coursing meetings, and swears every year that his dog was cheated out of the cup.

This is his winter amusement. In the summer he diverts himself like other idle gentlemen; cons over the Sporting Magazine, and the newspaper of the day; lounges to the inn to see the coaches change horses, and observes to a second whether the Regulator or the Defiance keeps time best; or stands sentinel in the garden, firing, from time to time, to keep the sparrows from the cherry trees. On wet days he is often seized with a fancy for mending and altering, and walks about the house, with a hammer sticking out of his pocket, doing no good, or a carpenter at his heels doing harm; sometimes dozes in his easy chair, and sometimes complains of a twinge of the gout. He has nearly given up country visiting, but is a great man at the Cranley Club, where he tells longer stories than ever of the chases, the hounds, and the hunters of his youth; of the great contested election; of matchless belles, now, alas! no more, and lords who have not left their fellow; rails at the degeneracy of the times, the decline of beauty, the increase of dandyism, the adulteration of port wine, and the decrease of good fellowship; gets half tipsy, and finally staggers home, escorted by his maid Dorothy, a rosy-cheeked damsel, of whose handiness and skill in cookery (his old house-keeper having long been dead,) he boasts almost as much as of the breed of his greyhounds, and whom the President of the Cranley Club has betted with his Vice, "that old Tom Hopkins," (so he irreverently calls him), "with all his talk of Duchesses and Countesses, will marry before the year is out;" and truly, I think so too.

LOUISA.

I HAVE said, in talking of my fair friend, Little Miss Wren—the Baroness Blankenhausen, I beg her pardon, how one forgets these new-married ladies' new titles!—I have said that this was a year fruitful in white gloves, silver favours and bride-cake; and since that event, weddings and tidings of weddings have poured in faster than ever. The last of these conjunctions is to me by far the most astonishing—so astonishing that although assisting at the ceremony I can hardly believe that it has taken place; but am still experiencing the same sort of surprise, that one feels at the death of an invalid of ten years' standing, or the termination of a twenty years' chancery suit.

It was on Monday last that I had the double pleasure of attending the nuptials of an old friend, and of giving in my resignation of the post of confidante, which I had filled with great credit and honour for twenty years and upwards. A married woman no longer needs the sympathy and consolation of a listening and pitying love-friend. Her story, according to all the laws of romance, is fairly over. So is my occupation. I shall miss it at first, just as one living in a church-yard would miss an entire cessation of those bells, which yet, from habit, he scarcely heard. I shall miss poor Louisa's sighs and blushes, written or spoken, especially when the post comes in, and she will miss me, perhaps, the most of the two; for I cannot help thinking that by the time the honey-moon is over, the necessity for a discreet confidante may be as pressing as ever. I cannot disguise from myself, that a damsel who has been used to fall in love with a new object at the end of every two or three months for the last twenty years, more or less, may, from mere habit, and without the slightest intentional infraction of the nuptial vow, fairly forget that she is married, and relapse into her old custom; more especially as her husband appears to be the only young man she has ever known with whom she has never even fancied herself in love.

Louisa L. and myself were old schoolfellows. Her father is a West-Indian planter of some property, who, having lost many children in the pestiferous climate of Barbadoes, did not choose to carry thither his only remaining daughter, and left her at school dur-

ing a long residence on his estate, not as a parlour-boarder but as a common pupil. She was a fine-looking girl, with a tall showy figure, and a face amazingly like what one sees in those old family portraits, which bear so great a resemblance to each other, whatever they might do to the originals. Like them, our heroine was distinguished by regular features, a high narrow forehead, black sleepy eyes, long dark hair, a clear complexion, and a general languishing composure of aspect.

Now this sounds like the description of a beautiful woman as well as of a beautiful picture; and so it would be, only that, unluckily, whilst content that the portrait should keep one look and one expression, we are apt to expect the real woman to vary occasionally, and are so unreasonable as to be disappointed when we find her countenance, however handsome (for the handsomer it is, the more we expect from it), fixed in the same mould of comely silliness from year's end to year's end. In such a case, almost any change would be felt as a relief, and a little ugliness would tell exceedingly.

Her conversation was quite in keeping with her style of person; much of the sort (making due allowance for the interval of a century) that one might expect from Sir Peter Lely's portrait of one's great-grandmother seated on a bank, attired in a robe of blue satin, with a crook in her hand, a rose in her bosom, and two or three sheep at her feet.

Simile apart, Louisa was a thoroughly well-meaning young woman, with little wit, and much good-nature, with a mind no more adapted to contain knowledge than a sieve to hold water; and a capacity of unlearning, a faculty of forgetting, most happily suited to the double and triple course of instruction which her father's protracted absence doomed her to undergo. She had been in the first class for five years to my certain knowledge; there I found her and there I left her, going over the same ground with each successive set, and regularly overtaken and outstripped by every girl of common talent. The only thing in which she ever made any real proficiency was music; by dint of incredible application she sang tolerably, played well on the piano, and better on the harp. But she had no genuine love even for that; and began to weary, as well she might, of her incessant practice, and her interminable education. The chief effect of this natural weariness was a strong desire to be married, the only probable mode of release that occurred to her; for of her father's return she and every one had begun to despair. How to carry this wish into effect, perplexed her not a little. If she had been blessed with a manœuvring mamma, indeed, the business might soon have been done. But poor Louisa was not so lucky. She had only an old bachelor uncle, and two maiden aunts, who, quite content to see to her comforts in a kind, quiet way; to have her at home in the holidays; to keep her well dressed, and well supplied with fruit and pocket-money, continued to think of her as a mere school-girl, and never dreamed of the grand object by which her whole soul was engrossed. So that the gentle damsel, left entirely to the resources of her own genius, could devise no better plan than to fix her own thoughts and attention, fall in love, as she called and perhaps thought it, with every man of suitable station who happened to fall in her way. The number of these successive, or alternate, or simultaneous preferences—for often she had two beaux, who were laid aside and taken up, in a sort of see-saw, as either happened to cross her path; and sometimes she had literally two at once — was really astonishing. So was her impartiality. Rich or poor, old or young, from seventeen to seventy, nothing came amiss. Equally amazing was the exceedingly small encouragement upon which her fancy could work; to dance with her, to sit next her at dinner, to ask her to play, one visit, one compliment, a look, a word, or half a word, was enough to send her sighing through the house, singing tender airs, and reading novels and love-ditties. The celebrated ballad in which Cowley gives a list of his mistresses — the "Chronicle," as he calls it — was but a type of the bead-roll of names that might have been strung up from her fancies. The common duration of a fit was about a month or six weeks, sometimes more, sometimes less, as one love-wedge drove out another; but generally the 'decline and fall' of these attachments (I believe that is the phrase), began at the month's end.

It was astonishing how well these little dramas were gotten up: any body not in the secret would have thought her really a tender inamorata, she had so many pretty sentimentalities, would wear nothing but the favourite's favourite colour, or sigh out her soul over his favourite song, or hoard his notes or visiting tickets in her bosom. One of her vagaries cost me a bad cold. The reigning swain happened to be a German count, who, talking somewhat fantastically of the stars, expressed a sort of superstitious devotion to the beautiful constellation Orion; he could not sleep, he said, till he had gazed on it. Now, our luckless damsel took this for a sort of covert assignation, a tender rendezvous of looks and thoughts, like the famous story of the two lovers in the Spectator; and the sky prospect from her apartment being rather limited, she used, to my unspeakable annoyance, to come star-gazing to mine. This *accès*, being encouraged by more attention than usual on the part of the gentleman — or rather she being unused to foreign manners, and mistaking the courtesy to a fair lady for a particular devotion,—lasted three whole months. Of course

she fell into other mistakes besides the general one of fancying all men in love with her. One winter, for instance, she fancied that a sickly gentleman, who used to sun himself on the pavement on our side of the square, walked there to listen to her music; so she obligingly moved her harp close to an open window (in December! N. B. she caught as bad a cold by these noon-day serenades, as ever her midnight assignations with the belted Orion gave me,) and played and sang during the whole time of his promenade. A little while after we discovered that the poor gentleman was deaf.

Nor were her own mistakes, though they were bad enough, the worst she had to encounter. A propensity so ridiculous could not escape undetected amongst such a tribe of tricksy and mischievous spirits; nor could all the real regard attracted by the fair Louisa's many good qualities save her from the malpractices of these little mockers. It was such fun to set her whirligig heart a-spinning, to give her a fresh object—sometimes a venerable grandfather, sometimes a school-boy brother, sometimes a married cousin—any lover would answer her purpose, and the more absurd or impossible, the better for ours.

I will, however, do myself the justice to say, that partly from compassion, and partly from vanity at being elected to the post of confidante, I was not by many degrees so guilty as many of my compeers. To be sure one Valentine, a piece of original poetry, with about as much sense and meaning as the famous love-song by a person of quality, and a few flowery billets to match, purporting to come from the same quarter,—that Valentine! I must plead guilty to that Valentine—but that was a venial offence, and besides she never found it out. So when I left the school, and even when six months after her father unexpectedly returned and took her to reside with him in a country town, I still continued the favoured depository of her secrets and her sighs.

We lived in distant counties, and met so seldom, that our intercourse was almost entirely epistolary. Intercourse did I say? My share of the correspondence, or of the dialogue, was little better than what a confidante on the French stage sustains with the *belle princesse*, from whom she is obliged to hear a hundred times told tale. I was a mere woman of straw—a thing to direct to. She never cared for answers, luckily for me; for at first whilst my young civility and conscientious sense of the duties of a polite letter-writer instigated me to reply point by point to her epistles, such blunders used to ensue as are sometimes produced in a game of cross purposes—a perpetual jostling of hopes and fears; condolence out of season; congratulation mistimed; praise misapplied; eternal confusion; never-ending mistakes. So, farther than half-a-dozen unmeaning affectionate words, I left off writing at all, perhaps with the lurking hope that she would follow my example. No such thing. The vent was necessary—I was the safety-valve to her heart, by which dangerous explosions were prevented. On she wrote—and oh such letters! crossed and recrossed, and in such a hand! so pretty and so unreadable! Straight and far apart, with long tails meeting each other, and the shorter letters all alike, all m's and n's.* In vain did I remonstrate against this fashionable but barbarous calligraphy, above all against the iniquitous checquer work; on she went from bad to worse, till at last, to my great comfort, her letters became altogether illegible, and my conscience was absolved from the necessity of even trying to read them. A frank made no difference; she went on with her double crossing, only there was double the quantity. Any thing like a regular perusal of these precious epistles was entirely out of the question; and yet I used to get at the meaning of most of them in the process of folding and unfolding, just as one sometimes catches the substance of an unreadable book by the mere act of cutting open the leaves. I knew her so well, that I could trace by a catch-word the progress of her history, and the particular object of her present regard—how she was herself in love with a lord, and how accusing a presumptuous linen-draper of being enamoured of her; how she had a young baronet at her feet, and how she could talk of nothing but an itinerant musician. Twice had she called on me to fulfil an old promise of attending her to the altar; and once (I was young and silly then myself,) once I had been so far taken in as actually to prepare a wedding-suit. Of course, when the final summons came, I was utterly incredulous. It was something like the fable of the shepherd's boy and the wolf; not a soul believed her, till the news arrived in a regular authentic document—a letter from her father—a worthy matter-of-fact man, whom poor Louisa's vagaries had actually kept in purgatory,—to mine, who also held the fair damsel for mad. Mr. S. mentioned his intended son-in-law as belonging to the medical profession; and on looking back to Louisa's letters, which under the new stimulus of curiosity, as to the approaching *denouement*, we contrived to decipher, we discovered that for upwards of two months Louisa had been deeply smitten with a young physician newly arrived at L——, whom she called by the name of Henry, and of whose fine tall person, as well as his dark and manly beauty she gave a most flaming description. This, of course, was the gentleman. I hastened to repair my fault and prepare my dresses; wrote a letter of congratula-

* Of all the varieties of bad writing, this, which looks at first sight quite plain, whilst to decipher it would puzzle an Œdipus, is the most provoking.

tion, packed my trunk, and set off. Imagine my astonishment, on arriving at L——, to find Louisa *tete-a-tete* with a little fair lad of eighteen or twenty, the head and shoulders shorter than herself, soft, delicate and lady-like—the very image of one of Beaumont and Fletcher's girls, who dress themselves in boys' clothes for love—and to be introduced to him as Mr. Peter Sharp, surgeon, the happy *futur* of Miss Louisa! I was never in so much danger of laughing in my life.

I gathered, however, from her admissions, and her father's more rational account, that whilst our fair friend was, according to the vulgar phrase, "setting her cap" at the handsome physician, the young surgeon, who had just finished his education by walking the hospitals, returned to L——, was taken into partnership by his father, and advised by his friends to look about for a wife as a necessary appendage to his profession—perhaps he might also be advised as to the lady, for Louisa has a pretty fortune for a country apothecary. However that might be, he began, as he assures me, to pay suit and service; whilst the fair object of his devotion, whose heart, or rather whose fancy, was completely pre-occupied, and who thought of Mr. Peter, if she thought of him at all, as a mere boy, entirely overlooked himself and his attentions—they being perhaps the only attentions of a young man which she ever did overlook in the whole course of her life. She confesses that the first entire sentence she ever heard him utter was the offer—the actual offer of heart and hand. Most ladies in her situation would have been a little posed; but Louisa is not a woman to be taken unawares: she has thought too much on the subject; has too well-founded a reliance on her own changeability: besides, she had set her heart on the "pomp, pride, and circumstance of glorious" bridal; the wedding was the thing—the wedding-day—the man was of little importance; Peter might do as well as Henry—so she said yes, and all was settled.

And a very splendid wedding it was; really, for those who like such things, almost worth the troubles and anxieties of a twenty years' love. The whole *cortége*, horses, carriages, friends, and bridemaids, down to the very breakfast cake and gloves, were according to most approved usage of books or of life. It might have made a fine conclusion to a novel; it did make a splendid paragraph in a newspaper. Every detail was correct, except one—nobody cried. That did vex her. That was an omission. She tried hard to repair it herself, and flourished her cambric handkerchief; but not a tear could she shed; neither could we, the bridemaidens, nor the father, nor the nuptial father, nor the clergyman, nor the clerk—nobody cried. The bridegroom came nearest—he, the only one who ought not to cry; but luckily he became sensible that it would be a breach of etiquette, and turned the involuntary emotion into a smile. All else went well. May the omen be auspicious, and tears, and the source of tears, keep far away from the kind and gentle Louisa!

CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE.

HARRY LEWINGTON.

"Beg, Frisk, beg!" said little Harry Lewington, as he sate in state on an inverted basket at his grandmother's door, discussing with great satisfaction, a huge porringer of bread and milk, whilst his sister Lucy, who had already despatched her breakfast, sate on the ground opposite to him, now twisting the long wreaths of the convolvulus-major into garlands—now throwing them away. "Beg, Frisk, beg!" repeated Harry, holding a bit of bread just out of the dog's reach; and the obedient Frisk squatted himself on his hind legs, and held up his fore paws, in patient supplication, until it pleased Master Harry to bestow upon him the tempting morsel.

The little boy and the little dog were great friends, notwithstanding that Harry, in the wantonness of power, would sometimes tease and tantalise his poor pet more than a good boy should have done. Frisk loved him dearly, much better than he did Lucy, although Lucy gave him every day part of her breakfast, without making him beg, and would tie pretty ribbons round his neck, and pat and stroke his rough head for half an hour together. Harry was Frisk's prime favourite; perhaps because the little dog, being himself of a merry disposition, liked the boy's lively play better than the girl's gentle caresses; perhaps because he recollected that Harry was his earliest patron, and firmest friend, during a time of great trouble: quadrupeds of his species having a knack of remembering past kindness, which it would do the biped, called man, no harm to copy.

Poor Frisk had come as a stray dog to Aberleigh. If he could have told his own story, it would probably have been a very pitiful one, of distresses and wanderings, of "hunger and foul weather," of kicks and cuffs, and all "the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes." Certain it is that he made his appearance at Mrs. Lewington's door in a miserable plight, wet, dirty, and half-starved; that there he encountered Harry, who took an immediate fancy to him, and Mrs. Lewington, who drove him off with a broom; that a violent dispute ensued between the good dame and her grandson, Harry persisting in inviting him in, Mrs. Lewington in frightening him away; that at first it ended in Frisk's being established as a sort of out-door pensioner,

subsisting on odds and ends, stray bones, and cold potatoes, surreptitiously obtained for him by his young protector, and sleeping in the identical basket, which, turned topsy-turvy, afterwards served Harry for a seat; until, at length, Mrs. Lewington, who had withstood the incessant importunity of the patron, and the persevering humility of his client, was propitiated by Frisk's own doggish exploit in barking away a set of pilferers, who were making an attack on her great pear-tree, and so frightened the thieves, that they not only scampered off in all haste, but left behind them their implements of thievery, a ladder, two baskets, and a sack; the good dame being thus actually a gainer by the intended robbery, and so well satisfied with Frisk's conduct, that she not only admitted him into her house, but considered him as one of her most vigilant and valuable inmates, worth all the watchmen that ever sprung a rattle.

The new guard proved to be a four-footed person of singular accomplishments. He could fetch or carry, either by land or by water; would pick up her thimble or cotton, if his old mistress happened to drop them; carry Lucy's little pattens to school in case of a shower; or take Harry's dinner to the same place with unimpeachable honesty. Moreover he was so strong on his hind legs, walked upright so firmly and gracefully, cut so many capers, and had so good an ear for music, that the more sagacious amongst the neighbours suspected him of having been, at least, the principal performer in a company of dancing dogs, even if he were not the learned dog Munito himself. Frisk, and his exploits, were the wonder of Aberleigh, where he had now resided a twelve-month (for August was come round again) with honour and credit to himself, and perfect satisfaction to all parties.

"Beg, Frisk, beg!" said Harry, and gave him, after long waiting, the expected morsel; and Frisk was contented, but Harry was not. The little boy, though a good-humoured fellow in the main, had fits of naughtiness which were apt to last all day, and this promised to be one of his worst. It was a holiday moreover, when he had nothing to do but to be naughty, and in the afternoon his cousins, Susan and William were to come and see him and Lucy, and the pears were to be gathered, and the children to have a treat; and Harry, in his impatience, thought the morning would never be over, and played such pranks by way of beguiling the time—buffeting Frisk for instance, burning his own fingers, cutting the curls off his sister's doll's flaxen wig, and finally breaking his grandmother's spectacles, —that before his visiters arrived, indeed almost immediately after dinner, he contrived to get sent to bed in disgrace.

Poor Harry! There he lay sprawling, kicking, and roaring, whilst Susan and William, and Lucy, were happily busy about the fine mellow Windsor pears; William up the tree gathering and shaking, Lucy and Susan catching them in their pinafores, and picking them up from the ground; now piling the rich fruit into the great baskets that the thieves had left behind; and now, happy urchins, eating at discretion of the nicest and ripest; Frisk barking gaily amongst them as if he were eating Windsor pears too.

Poor Harry! He could hear all their glee and merriment through the open window as he lay in bed, and the storm of passion having subsided into a gentle rain of self-pity, there he lay weeping and disconsolate, a grievous sob bursting forth every now and then as he heard the loud peal of childish laughter, and thought how he should have laughed, and how happy he should have been, and wondered whether his grandmother would so far relent as to let him get up to supper, and whether Lucy would be so good-natured as to bring him a pear. "It will be very ill-natured if she does not," thought Harry, and the poor boy's tears burst out anew. All on a sudden he heard a little foot on the stair, pit-a-pat, and thought she was coming. Pit-a-pat came the foot, nearer and nearer, and at last a small head peeped, half-afraid, through the half-open door. But it was not Lucy's head; it was Frisk's—poor Frisk whom Harry had been teasing all the morning, and who now came into the room wagging his tail with a great pear in his mouth, jumped on the bed, and laid it in the little boy's hand.

Note.—They who are accustomed to dogs whose sagacity has been improved by domestication and good society, will not be surprised at the foregoing anecdote. Cowper's story of the water-lily is quite a case in point; and a greyhound of my acquaintance, whose favourite playground was a large orchard, used regularly to bring the fallen apples to his mistress, was particularly anxious to get there after a windy night, and seemed to take singular pleasure in the amusement. This might be imitation; but an exploit of my own lamented and beautiful Mayflower, can hardly be traced to such an origin. Poor May, in common with most pet dogs, generally cared little for the persons whose duty it was to feed and attend upon her; she seemed to know that it was their place, and received their services with calm and aristocratic civility, reserving all demonstrations of affection for her friends of the parlour. One of her attendants, however, a lively, good-humoured boy, called Tom, she honoured with a considerable share of her attention, liked his company, and to the astonishment of the whole household, certainly liked him, a partiality which Tom returned with interest, combing and caressing her whenever opportunity offered. Master Tom was a celebrated player at marbles, and

May was accustomed to stand at his side watching or seeming to watch the game. One afternoon she jumped over the half-hatch into the stable, evidently in search of her friend Tom.—No Tom was there; raced round the garden—still in vain; peeped into the kitchen —Tom was as much to seek as ever; the maids who saw that she had something in her mouth, and were amused by her earnest searching air, tried to detain her or to decoy her into the parlour, but without the slightest success. On she went from chaise-house to wood-house, from wood-house to coal-house, from coal-house to cart-house, until she caught a well-known sound from the knife-board, and, opening a door in the way, darted on the astonished Tom (whose fright at the apparition cost one of our best carving forks, which he broke in his surprise) and deposited in his hand a marble, which, as we afterwards found, she had picked up in the road, following up her present by a series of capers and gambols, the most joyous and triumphant that can be imagined.

THE ELECTION.

A FEW years back a gentleman of the name of Danby came to reside in a small decayed borough town, not situate in our parts, and whether in Wiltshire or Cornwall matters not to our story, although to one of those counties the aforesaid town probably belonged, being what is called a close borough, the joint property of two noble families. Mr. Danby was evidently a man of large fortune, and that fortune as evidently acquired in trade,—indeed he made no more secret of the latter circumstance than of the former. He built himself a large, square, red house, equally ugly and commodious, just without the town; walled in a couple of acres of ground for a kitchen garden; kept a heavy one-horse chaise, a stout pony, and a brace of greyhounds; and having furnished his house solidly and handsomely, and arranged his domestic affairs to his heart's content, began to look about amongst his neighbours; scraped acquaintance with the lawyer, the apothecary, and the principal tradesman; subscribed to the reading room and the billiard room; became a member of the bowling green and the cricket club, and took as lively an interest in the affairs of his new residence, as if he had been born and bred in the borough.

Now this interest, however agreeable to himself, was by no means equally conducive to the quiet and comfort of the place. Mr. Danby was a little, square, dark man, with a cocked-up nose, a good-humoured, but very knowing smile, a pair of keen black eyes, a loud voluble speech, and a prodigious activity both of mind and body. His very look betokened his character,—and that character was one not uncommon among the middle ranks of Englishmen. In short, besides being, as he often boasted, a downright John Bull, the gentleman was a reformer, zealous and uncompromising as ever attended a dinner at the Crown and Anchor, or made an harangue in Palace-yard. He read Cobbett; had his own scheme for the redemption of tithes; and a plan, which, not understanding, I am sorry I cannot undertake to explain, for clearing off the national debt without loss or injury to any body.

Besides these great matters, which may rather be termed the theorique than the practique of reform, and which are at least perfectly inoffensive, Mr. Danby condescended to smaller and more worrying observances; and was, indeed, so strict and jealous a guardian of the purity of the corporation, and the incorruptibility of the vestry, that an alderman could not wag a finger, or a churchwarden stir a foot, without being called to an account by this vigilant defender of the rights, liberties, and purses of the people. He was, beyond a doubt, the most troublesome man in the parish —and that is a wide word. In the matter of reports and inquiries Mr. Hume was but a type of him. He would mingle economy with a parish dinner, and talk of retrenchment at the mayor's feast; brought an action, under the turnpike act, against the clerk and treasurer of the commissioners of the road; commenced a suit in chancery with the trustees of the charity school; and finally, threatened to open the borough—that is to say, to support any candidate who should offer to oppose the nominees of the two great families, the one whig and the other tory, who now possessed the two seats in parliament as quietly as their own hereditary estates;—a threat which recent instances of successful opposition in other places rendered not a little formidable to the noble owners.

What added considerably to the troublesome nature of Mr. Danby's inquisitions was, the general cleverness, ability, and information of the individual. He was not a man of classical education, and knew little of books; but with *things* he was especially conversant. Although very certain that Mr. Danby had been in business, nobody could guess what that business had been. None came amiss to him. He handled the rule and the yard with equal dexterity; astonished the butcher by his insight into the mysteries of fattening and dealing; and the grocer by his familiarity with the sugar and coffee markets; disentangled the perplexities of the confused mass of figures in the parish books with the dexterity of a sworn accomptant; and was so great upon points of law, so ready and accurate in quoting reports, cases, and precedents, that he would certainly have passed for a retired attorney, but for the zeal and alertness with

which, at his own expense, he was apt to rush into lawsuits.

With so remarkable a genius for turmoil, it is not to be doubted that Mr. Danby, in spite of many excellent and sterling qualities, succeeded in drawing upon himself no small degree of odium. The whole corporation were officially his enemies; but his principal opponent, or rather the person whom he considered as his principal opponent, was Mr. Cardonnel, the rector of the parish, who, besides several disputes pending between them (one especially respecting the proper situation of the church-organ, the placing of which harmonious instrument kept the whole town in discord for a twelvemonth,) was married to the Lady Elizabeth, sister of the Earl of B., one of the patrons of the borough; and being, as well as his wife, of a very popular and amiable character, was justly regarded by Mr. Danby as one of the chief obstacles to his projected reform.

Whilst, however, our reformer was, from the most patriotic motives, doing his best or his worst to dislike Mr. Cardonnel, events of a very different nature were operating to bring them together. Mr. Danby's family consisted of his wife,—a quiet lady-like woman, with very ill health, who did little else than walk from her bed to her sofa, eat water-gruel and drink soda-water,—and of an only daughter, who was, in a word, the very apple of her father's eye.

Rose Danby was indeed a daughter of whom any father might have been proud:—of middle height and exquisite symmetry, with a rich, dark, glowing complexion, a profusion of glossy, curling, raven hair, large affectionate black eyes, and a countenance at once so sweet and so spirited, that her ready smile played over her face like a sunbeam. Her temper and understanding were in exact keeping with such a countenance—playful, gentle, clever, and kind; and her accomplishments and acquirements of the very highest order. When her father entered on his new residence she had just completed her fifteenth year; and he, unable longer to dispense with the pleasure of her society, took her from the excellent school near London, at which she had hitherto been placed, and determined that her education should be finished by masters at home.

It so happened, that this little town contained one celebrated artist, a professor of dancing, who kept a weekly academy for young ladies, which was attended by half the families of gentility in the county. M. Le Grand (for the dancing-master was a little lively Frenchman) was delighted with Rose. He declared that she was his best pupil, his very best, the best that ever he had in his life. "Mais voyez, donc, Monsieur!" said he one day to her father, who would have scorned to know the French for "How d'ye do;"—"Voyez, comme elle met de l'aplomb, de la force, de la netteté, dans ses entrechats! Qu'elle est leste, et légère, et pétrie de graces, la petite!" And Mr. Danby comprehending only that the artist was praising his darling, swore that Monsieur was a good fellow, and returned the compliment, after the English fashion, by sending him a haunch of venison the next day.

But M. Le Grand was not the only admirer whom Rose met with at the dancing-school.

It chanced that Mr. Cardonnel also had an only daughter, a young person, about the same age, bringing up under the eye of her mother, and a constant attendant at the professor's academy. The two girls, nearly of a height and both good dancers, were placed together as partners; and being almost equally prepossessing in person and manner, (for Mary Cardonnel was a sweet, delicate, fair creature, whose mild blue eyes seemed appealing to the kindness of every one they looked upon,) took an immediate and lasting fancy to each other; shook hands at meeting and parting, smiled whenever their glances chanced to encounter; and soon began to exchange a few kind and hurried words in the pauses of the dance, and to hold more continuous chat at the conclusion. And Lady Elizabeth, almost as much charmed with Rose as her daughter, seeing in the lovely little girl every thing to like and nothing to disapprove, encouraged and joined in the acquaintance; attended with a motherly care to her cloaking and shawling; took her home in her own carriage when it rained; and finally waylaid Mr. Danby, who always came himself to fetch his darling, and with her bland and gracious smile requested the pleasure of Miss Danby's company to a party of young people, which she was about to give on the occasion of her daughter's birthday. I am afraid that our sturdy reformer was going to say, No!—But Rose's "Oh papa!" was irresistible; and to the party she went.

After this, the young people became every day more intimate. Lady Elizabeth waited on Mrs. Danby, and Mrs. Danby returned the call; but her state of health precluded visiting, and her husband, who piqued himself on firmness and consistency, contrived, though with some violence to his natural kindness of temper, to evade the friendly advances and invitations of the rector.

The two girls, however, saw one another almost every day. It was a friendship like that of Rosalind and Celia, whom, by the way, they severally resembled in temper and character—Rose having much of the brilliant gaiety of the one fair cousin, and Mary the softer and gentler charm of the other. They rode, walked and sang together; were never happy asunder; played the same music; read the same books; dressed alike; worked for each other; and interchanged their own little

property of trinkets and flowers, with a generosity that seemed only emulous which should give most.

At first, Mr. Danby was a little jealous of Rose's partiality to the rectory; but she was so fond of him, so attentive to his pleasures, that he could not find in his heart to check hers: and when after a long and dangerous illness, with which the always delicate Mary was affected, Mr. Cardonnel went to him, and with tears streaming down his cheeks, told him he believed that under Providence he owed his daughter's life to Rose's unwearying care, the father's heart was fairly vanquished; he wrung the good rector's hand, and never grumbled at her long visits again. Lady Elizabeth, also, had her share in producing this change of feeling, by presenting him in return for innumerable baskets of peaches and melons, and hot-house grapes (in the culture of which he was curious,) with a portrait of Rose, drawn by herself—a strong and beautiful likeness, with his own favourite greyhound at her feet; a picture which he would not have exchanged for "The Transfiguration."

Perhaps too, consistent as he thought himself, he was not without an unconscious respect for the birth and station which he affected to despise; and was, at least, as proud of the admiration which his daughter excited in those privileged circles, as of the sturdy independence which he exhibited by keeping aloof from them in his own person. Certain it is, that his spirit of reformation insensibly relaxed, particularly towards the rector; and that he not only ceded the contested point of the organ, but presented a splendid set of pulpit hangings to the church itself.

Time wore on; Rose had refused half the offers of gentility in the town and neighbourhood; her heart appeared to be invulnerable. Her less affluent and less brilliant friend was generally understood (and as Rose, on hearing the report, did not contradict it, the rumour passed for certainty) to be engaged to a nephew of her mother's, Sir William Frampton, a young gentleman of splendid fortune, who had lately passed much time at his fine place in the neighbourhood.

Time wore on; and Rose was now nineteen, when an event occurred, which threatened a grievous interruption to her happiness. The Earl of B.'s member died; his nephew Sir William Frampton, supported by his uncle's powerful interest, offered himself for the borough; an independent candidate started at the same time; and Mr. Danby found himself compelled, by his vaunted consistency, to insist on his daughter's renouncing her visits to the rectory, at least until after the termination of the election. Rose wept and pleaded, pleaded and wept in vain. Her father was obdurate; and she, after writing a most affectionate note to Mary Cardonnel, retired to her own room in very bad spirits, and perhaps, for the first time in her life, in very bad humour.

About half an hour afterwards, Sir William Frampton and Mr. Cardonnel called at the red house.

"We are come, Mr. Danby," said the rector, "to solicit your interest"—

"Nay, nay, my good friend," returned the reformer—"you know that my interest is promised, and that I cannot with any consistency"—

"To solicit your interest with Rose"—resumed his reverence.

"With Rose!" interrupted Mr. Danby.

"Ay—for the gift of her heart and hand,—that being, I believe, the suffrage which my good nephew here is most anxious to secure," rejoined Mr. Cardonnel.

"With Rose!" again ejaculated Mr. Danby: "Why, I thought that your daughter"—

"The gipsy has not told you, then!" replied the rector. "Why William and she have been playing the parts of Romeo and Juliet for these six months past."

"My Rose!" again exclaimed Mr. Danby. "Why Rose! Rose! I say!" and the astonished father rushed out of the room, and returned the next minute, holding the blushing girl by the arm.

"Rose, do you love this young man?"

"Oh, papa!" said Rose.

"Will you marry him?"

"Oh, papa!"

"Do you wish me to tell him that you will not marry him?"

To this question Rose returned no answer; she only blushed the deeper, and looked down with a half smile.

"Take her, then," resumed Mr. Danby; "I see the girl loves you. I can't vote for you, though, for I've promised, and you know, my good Sir, that an honest man's word"—

"I don't want your vote, my dear Sir," interrupted Sir William Frampton; "I don't ask for your vote, although the loss of it may cost me my seat, and my uncle his borough. This is the election that I care about; the only election worth caring about—Is it not, my own sweet Rose?—the election of which the object lasts for life, and the result is happiness. That's the election worth caring about—Is it not, mine own Rose?"

And Rose blushed an affirmative; and Mr. Danby shook his intended son-in-law's hand, until he almost wrung it off, repeating at every moment—"I can't vote for you, for a man must be consistent; but you're the best fellow in the world, and you shall have my Rose. And Rose will be a great lady," continued the delighted father;—"my little Rose will be a great lady after all!"

A CASTLE IN THE AIR.

"Can any one tell me of a house to be let hereabouts?" asked I, this afternoon, coming into the room, with an open letter in my hand, and an unusual animation of feeling and of manner. "Our friends, the Camdens, want to live amongst us again, and have commissioned me to make inquiries for a residence."

This announcement, as I expected, gave general delight; for Mr. Camden is the most excellent and most agreeable person under the sun, except his wife, who is even more amiable than her amiable husband: to regain such neighbours was felt to be an universal benefit, more especially to us who were so happy as to call them friends. My own interest in the house question was participated by all around me, and the usual enumeration of vacant mansions, and the several objections to each (for where ever was a vacant mansion without its objection?) began with zeal and rapidity.

"Cranley Hall," said one.

"Too large!"

"Hinton Park?"

"Too much land."

"The White House at Hannonby—the Belvidere, as the late people called it?"

"What! Is that flourishing establishment done up? But Hannonby is too far off—ten miles at least."

"Queen's-bridge Cottage?"

"Ay, that sweet place would have suited exactly, but it's let. The Browns took it only yesterday."

"Sydenham Court?"

"That might have done too, but it is not in the market. The Smiths intend to stay."

"Lanton Abbey?"

"Too low; grievously damp."

By this time, however, we had arrived at the end of our list; nobody could remember another place to be let, or likely to be let, and confessing ourselves too fastidious, we went again over our catalogue raisonné with expectations much sobered, and objections much modified, and were beginning to find out that Cranley Hall was not so very large, nor Lanton Abbey so exceedingly damp, when one of our party exclaimed suddenly, "We never thought of Hatherden Hill! surely that is small enough and dry enough!" and it being immediately recollected that Hatherden was only a mile off, we lost sight of all faults in this great recommendation, and wrote immediately to the lawyer who had the charge of letting the place, whilst I myself and my most efficient assistant, sallied forth to survey it on the instant.

It was a bright cool afternoon about the middle of August, and we proceeded in high spirits towards our destination, talking as we went, of the excellence and agreeableness of our delightful friends, and anticipating the high intellectual pleasure, the gratification to the taste and the affections, which our renewed intercourse with persons so accomplished and so amiable, could not fail to afford; both agreeing that Hatherden was the very place we wanted, the very situation, the very distance, the very size. In agreeing with me, however, my companion could not help reminding me rather maliciously, how very much, in our late worthy neighbours', the Norris's time, I had been used to hate and shun this paragon of places; how frequently I had declared Hatherden too distant for a walk, and too near for a drive; how constantly I had complained of fatigue in mounting the hill, and of cold in crossing the common; and how, finally, my half-yearly visits of civility had dwindled first into annual, then into biennial calls, and would doubtless have extended themselves into triennial marks of remembrance, if our neighbours had but remained long enough. "To be sure," added he, recollecting, probably, how he, with his stricter sense of politeness, used to stave off a call for a month together, taking shame to himself every evening for his neglect, retaining 'at once the conscience and the sin!' "To be sure, Norris was a sad bore! We shall find the hill easier to climb when the Camdens live on the top of it." An observation to which I assented most heartily.

On we went gaily; just pausing to admire Master Keep, the shoemaker's farming, who having a bit of garden-ground to spare, sowed it with wheat instead of planting it with potatoes, and is now, aided by his lame apprentice, very literally carrying his crop. I fancy they mean to thresh their corn in the wood-house, at least there they are depositing the sheaves. The produce may amount to four bushels. My companion, a better judge, says to three; and it has cost the new farmer two superb scarecrows, and gunpowder enough for a review, to keep off the sparrows. Well, it has been amusement and variety, however! and gives him an interest in the agricultural corner of the county newspaper. Master Keep is well to do in the world, and can afford himself such a diversion. For my part, I like these little experiments, even if they be not over-gainful. They show enterprise: a shoemaker of less genius would never have got beyond a crop of turnips.

On we went—down the lane, over the bridge, up the hill—for there really is a hill, and one of some steepness for Berkshire, and across the common, once so dreary, but now bright and glittering, under the double influence of an August sun, and our own good spirits, until we were stopped by the gate of the lawn, which was of course locked, and obliged to wait until a boy should summon the old woman who had charge of the house, and who was now at work in a neighbouring harvest-field, to give us entrance.

Boys in plenty were there. The fine black-headed lad, George Ropley—who, with his olive complexion, his bright dark eyes, and his keen intelligent features, looks so Italian, but who is yet in all his ways so thoroughly and genially English—had been gathering in his father's crop of apples, and was amusing himself with tossing some twenty amongst as many urchins of either sex who had collected round him, to partake of the fruit and the sport. There he stood tossing the ripe ruddy apples; some high in the air for a catch, some low amongst the bushes for a hunt; some one way, some another, puzzling and perplexing the rogues, but taking care that none should go appleless in the midst of his fun. And what fun it was to them all, thrower and catchers! What infinite delight! How they laughed and shouted, and tumbled and ran! How they watched every motion of George Ropley's hand; the boys and the girls, and the "toddling wee things," of whom one could not distinctly make out whether they were the one or the other! And how often was that hand tossed up empty, flinging nothing, in order to cheat the wary watchers!—Now he threw an apple into the midst of the group, and what a scramble! Then at a distance, and what a race! The five nearest started; one, a great boy, stumbled over a mole-hill, and was flung out; two of the little ones were distanced; and it was a neck-and-neck heat between a girl in a pink frock (my acquaintance Liddy Wheeler) and a boy in a tattered jacket, name unknown. With fair play Liddy would have beaten, but he of the ragged jacket pulled her back by her new pink frock, rushed forward, and conquered,—George gallantly flinging his last apple into her lap to console her for her defeat.

By this time the aged portress (Dame Wheeler, Liddy's grandmother) had given us admittance, and we soon stood on the steps in front of the house, in calm survey of the scene before us. Hatherden was just the place to like or not to like, according to the feeling of the hour; a respectable, comfortable country house, with a lawn before, a paddock on one side, a shrubbery on the other; offices and a kitchen garden behind, and the usual ornaments of villas and advertisements, a green-house and a verandah. Now my thoughts were *couleur de rose*, and Hatherden was charming. Even the beds intended for flowers on the lawn, but which, under a summer's neglect, were now dismal receptacles of seeds and weeds, did not shock my gardening eye so much as my companion evidently expected. "We must get my factotum, Clarke, here to-morrow," so ran my thoughts, "to clear away that rubbish, and try a little bold transplanting: late hollyhocks, late dahlias, a few pots of lobelias and chrysanthemums, a few patches of coreopsis and china-asters, and plenty of scarlet geraniums, will soon make this desolation flourishing. A good gardener can move any thing now-a-days, whether in bloom or not," thought I, with much complacency, "and Clarke's a man to transplant Windsor forest without withering a leaf. We 'll have him to-morrow."

The same happy disposition continued after I entered the house. And when left alone in the echoing empty breakfast-room, with only one shutter opened, whilst Dame Wheeler was guiding the companion of my survey to the stable-yard, I amused myself with making in my own mind, comparisons between what had been, and what would be. There she used to sit, poor Mrs. Norris, in this large airy room, in the midst of its solid handsome furniture, in a great chair at a great table, busily at work for one of her seven small children; the table piled with frocks, trousers, petticoats, shirts, pinafores, hats, bonnets, all sorts of children's gear, masculine and feminine, together with spelling-books, copy-books, ivory alphabets, dissected maps, dolls, toys, and gingerbread, for the same small people. There she sate, a careful mother, fretting over their naughtiness and their ailments; always in fear of the sun, or the wind, or the rain, of their running to heat themselves, or their standing still to catch cold: not a book in the house fit for a person turned of eight years old! not a grown-up idea! not a thought beyond the nursery! One wondered what she could have talked of before she had children. Good Mrs. Norris, such was she. Good Mr. Norris was, for all purposes of neighbourhood, worse still. He was gapy and fidgety, and prosy and dozy, kept a tool-chest and a medicine-chest, weighed out manna and magnesia, constructed fishing-flies, and nets for fruit-trees, turned nutmeg-graters, lined his wife's work-box, and dressed his little daughter's doll; and had a tone of conversation perfectly in keeping with his tastes and pursuits, abundantly tedious, thin and small. One talked down to him, worthy gentleman, as one would to his son Willy. These were the neighbours that had been. What wonder that the hill was steep, and the way long, and the common dreary? Then came pleasant thoughts of the neighbours that were to be. The lovely and accomplished wife, so sweet and womanly; the elegant and highly-informed husband, so spirited and manly! Art and literature, and wisdom and wit, adorning with a wreathy and garlandy splendour all that is noblest in mind and purest in heart! What wonder that Hatherden became more and more interesting in its anticipated charms, and that I went gaily about the place, taking note of all that could contribute to the comfort of its future inhabitants.

Home I came, a glad and busy creature, revolving in my mind the wants of the house and their speediest remedies—new paper for

the drawing-room; new wainscoting for the dining parlour; a stove for the laundry; a lock for the wine-cellar; baizing the door of the library; and new painting the hall;—to say nothing of the grand design of Clarke and the flower-beds.

So full was I of busy thoughts, and so desirous to put my plans in train without the loss of a moment, that although the tossing of apples had now resolved itself into a most irregular game of cricket,—George Ropley being batting at one wicket, with little Sam Coper for his mate at the other;—Sam, an urchin of seven years old, but the son of an old player, full of cricket blood, born, as it were, with a bat in his hand, getting double the notches of his tall partner,—an indignity which that well-natured stripling bore with surprising good-humour: and although the opposite side consisted of Liddy Wheeler bowling at one end, her old competitor of the ragged jacket at the other, and one urchin in trousers, and one in petticoats, standing out; in spite of the temptation of watching this comical parody on that manly exercise, rendered doubly amusing by the scientific manner in which little Sam stood at his wicket, the perfect gravity of the fieldsman in petticoats, and the serious air with which those two worthies called Liddy to order whenever she transgressed any rule of the game:—Sam will certainly be a great player some day or other, and so (if he be not a girl, for really there 's no telling) will the young gentleman standing out. In spite, however, of the great temptation of overlooking a favourite divertisement, with variations so truly original, home we went, hardly pausing to observe the housing of Master Keep's wheat harvest. Home we went, adding at every step a fresh story to our Castle in the Air, anticipating happy mornings and joyous evenings at dear Hatherden; in love with the place and all about it, and quite convinced that the hill was nothing, the distance nothing, and the walk by far the prettiest in this neighbourhood.

Home we came, and there we found two letters: one from Mr. Camden, sent per coach, to say that he found they must go abroad immediately, and that they could not therefore think of coming into Berkshire for a year or more; one from the lawyer left in charge of Hatherden, to say, that we could not have the place, as the Norris's were returning to their old house forthwith. And my Castle is knocked down, blown up—which is the right word for the demolishing of such airy edifices? And Hatherden is as far off, and the hill as steep, and the common as dreary as ever.

THE TWO SISTERS.

The pretty square Farm-house, standing at the corner where Kibes Lane crosses the brook, or the brook crosses Kibes Lane, (for the first phrase, although giving by far the closest picture of the place, does, it must be confessed, look rather Irish,) and where the aforesaid brook winds away by the side of another lane, until it spread into a river-like dignity, as it meanders through the sunny plain of Hartley Common, and finally disappears amidst the green recesses of Pinge Wood—that pretty square Farm-house, half hidden by the tall elms in the flower court before it, which, with the spacious garden and orchard behind, and the extensive barn-yards and out-buildings, so completely occupies one of the angles formed by the crossing of the lane and the stream,—that pretty Farm-house contains one of the happiest and most prosperous families in Aberleigh, the large and thriving family of Farmer Evans.

Whether from skill or from good fortune, or as is most probable, from a lucky mixture of both, every thing goes right in his great farm. His crops are the best in the parish; his hay is never spoiled; his cattle never die; his servants never thieve; his children are never ill. He buys cheap, and sells dear: money gathers about him like a snow-ball; and yet, in spite of all this provoking and intolerable prosperity, every body loves Farmer Evans. He is so hospitable, so good-natured, so generous,—so homely! There, after all, lies the charm. Riches have not only not *spoilt* the man, but they have not altered him. He is just the same in look, and word, and way, that he was thirty years ago, when he and his wife, with two sorry horses, one cow, and three pigs, began the world at Dean-Gate, a little bargain of twenty acres, two miles off:—ay, and his wife is the same woman!—the same frugal, tidy, industrious, good-natured Mrs. Evans, so noted for her activity of tongue and limb, her good looks, and her plain dressing: as frugal, as good-natured, as active, and as plain dressing a Mrs. Evans at forty-five as she was at nineteen, and, in a different way, almost as good-looking.

Their children—six "boys," as Farmer Evans promiscuously calls them, whose ages vary from eight to eight-and-twenty—and three girls, two grown up, and one not yet seven, the youngest of the family, are just what might be expected from parents so simple and so good. The young men, intelligent and well-conducted; the boys, docile and promising; and the little girl as pretty a curly-headed, rosy-cheeked poppet, as ever was the pet and plaything of a large family. It is, however, with the eldest daughters that we have to do.

Jane and Fanny Evans were as much alike

as hath often befallen any two sisters not born at one time;—for in the matter of twin children, there has been a series of puzzles ever since the days of the Dromios. Nearly of an age, (I believe that at this moment both are turned of nineteen, and neither have reached twenty,) exactly of a stature, (so high that Frederick would have coveted them for wives for his tall regiment)—with hazel eyes, large mouths, full lips, white teeth, brown hair, clear healthy complexions, and that sort of nose which is neither Grecian nor Roman, nor aquiline, nor *le petit nez retroussé* that some persons prefer to them all; but a nose which, moderately prominent, and sufficiently well-shaped, is yet, as far as I know, anonymous, although it be perhaps as common and as well-looking a feature as is to be seen on an English face.

Altogether, they were a pair of tall and comely maidens, and being constantly attired in garments of the same colour and fashion, looked at all times so much alike, that no stranger ever dreamed of knowing them apart; and even their acquaintances were rather accustomed to think and speak of them generally as "the Evans's" than as the separate individuals, Jane and Fanny. Even those who did pretend to distinguish the one from the other, were not exempt from mistakes, which the sisters, Fanny especially, who delighted in the fun so often produced by the unusual resemblance, were apt to favour by changing places in a walk, or slipping from one side to the other at a country tea-party, or playing a hundred innocent tricks to occasion at once a grave blunder, and a merry laugh.

Old Tabitha Goodwin, for instance, who, being rather purblind, was jealous of being suspected of seeing less clearly than her neighbours, and had defied even the Evans's to puzzle her discernment—seeking in vain on Fanny's hand the cut finger which she had dressed on Jane's, ascribed the incredible cure to the merits of her own incomparable salve, and could hardly be undeceived, even by the pulling off of Jane's glove, and the exhibition of the lacerated digital sewed round by her own bandage.

Young George Bailey too, the greatest beau in the parish, having betted at a Christmas party that he would dance with every pretty girl in the room, lost his wager (which Fanny had overheard) by that saucy damsel's slipping into her sister's place, and persuading her to join her own unconscious partner; so that George danced twice with Fanny and not at all with Jane;—a flattering piece of malice, which proved, as the young gentleman (a rustic exquisite of the first water) was pleased to assert, that Miss Fanny was not displeased with her partner. How little does a vain man know of woman-kind! If she had liked him, she would not have played the trick for the mines of Golconda.

In short, from their school-days, when Jane was chidden for Fanny's bad work, and Fanny slapped for Jane's bad spelling, down to this, their prime of womanhood, there had been no end to the confusion produced by this remarkable instance of family likeness.

And yet Nature, who sets some mark of individuality upon even her meanest productions, making some unnoted difference between the lambs dropped from one ewe, the robins bred in one nest, the flowers growing on one stalk, and the leaves hanging from one tree, had not left these young maidens without one great and permanent distinction—a natural and striking dissimilarity of temper. Equally industrious, affectionate, happy, and kind; each was kind, happy, affectionate, and industrious in a different way. Jane was grave; Fanny was gay. If you heard a laugh or song, be sure it was Fanny: she who smiled, for certain was Fanny: she who jumped the stile when her sister opened the gate, was Fanny: she who chased the pigs from the garden as merrily as if she were running a race, so that the very pigs did not mind her, was Fanny.

On the other hand, she that so carefully was making, with its own ravelled threads, an invisible darn in her mother's handkerchief, and hearing her little sister read the while; she that so patiently was feeding, one by one, two broods of young turkeys; she that so pensively was watering her own bed of delicate and somewhat rare plants,—the pale stars of the Alpine pink, or the alabaster blossoms of the white evening primrose, whose modest flowers, dying off into a blush, resembled her own character, was Jane.

Some of the gossips of Aberleigh used to assert, that Jane's sighing over the flowers, as well as the early steadiness of her character, arose from an engagement to my lord's head gardener, an intelligent, sedate, and sober young Scotchman. Of this I know nothing. Certain it is, that the prettiest and newest plants were always to be found in Jane's little flower-border, and if Mr. Archibald Maclane did sometimes come to look after them, I do not see that it was any business of anybody's.

In the mean time, a visiter of a different description arrived at the farm. A cousin of Mrs. Evans's had been as successful in trade as her husband had been in agriculture, and he had now sent his only son to become acquainted with his relations, and to spend some weeks in their family.

Charles Foster was a fine young man, whose father was neither more nor less than a rich linen-draper in a great town; but whose manners, education, mind, and character might have done honour to a far higher station. He was, in a word, one of nature's gentlemen; and in nothing did he more thoroughly show his own taste and good-breeding, than by entering entirely into the homely ways and old-

fashioned habits of his country cousins. He was delighted with the simplicity, frugality, and industry, which blended well with the sterling goodness and genuine abundance of the great English farm-house. The young women especially pleased him much. They formed a strong contrast with anything that he had met with before. No finery! no coquetry! no French! no piano! It is impossible to describe the sensation of relief and comfort with which Charles Foster, sick of musical Misses, ascertained that the whole dwelling did not contain a single instrument, except the bassoon, on which George Evans was wont, every Sunday at church, to excruciate the ears of the whole congregation. He liked both sisters. Jane's softness and considerateness engaged his full esteem; but Fanny's innocent playfulness suited best with his own high spirits, and animated conversation. He had known them apart from the first; and indeed denied that the likeness was at all puzzling, or more than is usual between sisters, and secretly thought Fanny as much prettier than her sister, as she was avowedly merrier. In doors and out, he was constantly at her side; and before he had been a month in the house, all its inmates had given Charles Foster, as a lover, to his young cousin; and she, when rallied on the subject, cried fie! and pish! and pshaw! and wondered how people could talk such nonsense, and liked to have such nonsense talked to her better than any thing in the world.

Affairs were in this state, when one night Jane appeared even graver and more thoughtful than usual, and far, far sadder. She sighed deeply; and Fanny, for the two sisters shared the same little room, inquired tenderly, "What ailed her?" The inquiry seemed to make Jane worse. She burst into tears, whilst Fanny hung over her, and soothed her. At length, she roused herself by a strong effort; and turning away from her affectionate comforter, said in a low tone: "I have had a great vexation to-night, Fanny; Charles Foster has asked me to marry him."

"Charles Foster! Did you say Charles Foster?" asked poor Fanny, trembling, unwilling even to trust her own senses against the evidence of her heart; "Charles Foster?"

"Yes, our cousin, Charles Foster."

"And you have accepted him?" inquired Fanny, in a hoarse voice.

"Oh no! no! Do you think I have forgotten poor Archibald? Besides *I* am not the person whom he ought to have asked to marry him; false and heartless as he is. I would not be his wife; cruel, unfeeling, unmanly as his conduct has been! No! not if he could make me queen of England?"

"You refused him then?"

"No, my father met us suddenly, just as I was recovering from the surprise and indignation, that at first struck me dumb. But I shall refuse him most certainly;—the false, deceitful, ungrateful villain!"

"My dear father! He will be disappointed. So will my mother."

"They will both be disappointed, and both angry—but not at my refusal. Oh, how they will despise him!" added Jane; and poor Fanny, melted by her sister's sympathy, and touched by an indignation most unusual in that mild and gentle girl, could no longer command her feelings, but flung herself on the bed in that agony of passion and grief, which the first great sorrow seldom fails to excite in a young heart.

After a while she resumed the conversation. "We must not blame him too severely, Jane. Perhaps my vanity made me think his attentions meant more than they really did, and you had all taken up the notion. But you must not speak of him so unkindly. He has done nothing but what is natural. You are so much wiser, and better than I am, my own dear Jane! He laughed and talked with me: but he felt your goodness,—and he was right. I was never worthy of him, and you are; and if it were not for Archibald, I should rejoice from the bottom of my heart," continued Fanny, sobbing, "if you would accept"—but unable to finish her generous wish, she burst into a fresh flow of tears; and the sisters, mutually and strongly affected, wept in each other's arms, and were comforted.

That night Fanny cried herself to sleep: but such sleep is not of long duration. Before dawn she was up, and pacing, with restless irritability, the dewy grass-walks of the garden and orchard. In less than half an hour, a light elastic step (she knew the sound well!) came rapidly behind her; a hand, (oh, how often had she thrilled at the touch of that hand!) tried to draw hers under his own; whilst a well-known voice addressed her in the softest and tenderest accents: "Fanny, my own sweet Fanny! have you thought of what I said to you last night?"

"To *me*?" replied Fanny with bitterness.

"Ay, to be sure, to your own dear self! Do you not remember the question I asked you, when your good father, for the first time unwelcome, joined us so suddenly that you had no time to say, Yes? And will you not say *Yes* now?"

"Mr. Foster!" replied Fanny, with some spirit, "you are under a mistake here. It was to Jane that you made a proposal yesterday evening; and you are taking me for her at this moment."

"Mistake you for your sister! Propose to Jane! Incredible! Impossible! You are jesting."

"Then he mistook Jane for me, last night; and he is no deceiver!" thought Fanny to herself, as with smiles beaming brightly through her tears, she turned round at his reiterated prayers, and yielded the hand he sought to his

pressure. "He mistook her for me! He, that defied us to perplex him!"

And so it was: an unconscious and unobserved change of place, as either sister resumed her station beside little Betsy, who had scampered away after a glow-worm, added to the deepening twilight, and the lovers' natural embarrassment, had produced the confusion which gave poor Fanny a night's misery, to be compensated by a lifetime of happiness. Jane was almost as glad to lose a lover as her sister was to regain one: Charles is gone home to his father's to make preparations for his bride; Archibald has taken a great nursery garden, and there is some talk in Aberleigh that the marriage of the two sisters is to be celebrated on the same day.

CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE.

PRIDE SHALL HAVE A FALL.

"So you Aberleigh boys are about to play Sandleford," said George Leslie to Horace Lucas:—"have you a good eleven?"

"Our players are pretty fair, I believe," replied Horace, "but the number is short. Both sides have agreed to take a mate or two from other parishes, and I rode over to ask your cousin Charles and yourself to join our Aberleigh party."

"Faith! you are in luck, my good friend," cried George Leslie, "you may look upon the game as won. Charles, to be sure, is no great hand; can't bowl; hits up; and a bad field—a slow awkward field. But I—Did you never see me play? And I am so much improved this season! I ought to be improved, for I have seen such play, and such players! I am just returned from my aunt's, who lives within a mile of Bramshill—Sir John's you know—and there were all the great men of the day, all the Lord's men: Mr. Ward; and Mr. Budd—I'm thought to stand at my wicket very much like Mr. Budd; Saunders, who is reckoned, take him all in all, the best player in England; Saunders; and Broadbridge the Sussex bowler—I don't patronize their system, though, I stick to the old steady scientific game; Lord Frederick; and Mr. Knight—he's a fine figure of a man is Mr. Knight, the finest figure of any of them, and very great in the field; old Howard the bowler,—he's my model; and in short, almost every celebrated cricketer in England. I know that you Westminsters think that nobody can do any thing so well as yourselves; but as far as cricket goes—ask Charles, he'll tell you that you are in luck to have me." And off the young gentleman strutted to pay his compliments to some ladies who were talking to his mother on the other side of the lawn; for this conversation took place on a fine day in July, under the heavy shadow of some tall elms, in Mrs. Leslie's beautiful grounds.

George's speech had been delivered in a high, solemn, vaunting tone, as grave as Don Quixote; but of the two who remained, Horace, a quick, arch, lively lad, laughed outright, and Charles, a mild, fair, delicate boy, could not help smiling.

"He gives himself a comfortable character, however," said Horace, "rather too good to be true; whilst of you he speaks modestly enough. Are you so bad, Charles? And is he such a paragon of cricketers? Does he bat like Mr. Budd, and field like Mr. Knight, and bowl like Howard?"

"Why, not exactly," was the reply; "but there's more truth than you think for. He's a good, but uncertain player; and I am a bad one, a very bad one; shy and timid and awkward; always feeling when the game is over that I could have done better; just as I have felt when a clever man, your father for instance, has had the goodness to speak to me, how much better I ought to have talked. Somehow the power never comes at the right time, at either game; so that I may say, as some people say of cucumbers, that I like cricket, but that cricket does not like me."

"Good or bad, my dear fellow, I'll take you," said Horace, "nervousness and all. It's a pity that you two cousins could not make over to one another some parcel of your several qualities; you would be much the happier for a dash of George's self-conceit, and he could spare enough to set up a whole regiment of dandies; whilst he would be all the better for your superfluous modesty. However, I'll take you both, right thankfully." And the arrangements were entered into forthwith. They were to meet on the ground the ensuing morning to play the match; different engagements preventing the Leslies from practising with the Aberleigh side that evening, as Horace had wished and intended; for our friend Horace, ardent and keen in every thing, whether of sport or study, had set his heart on winning this match, and was very desirous of trying the powers of his new allies. Fifty times during the evening did he count over his own good players, and the good players of the other side, and gravely conclude "It will all depend on the Leslies. How I wish to-morrow were come!" He said this so often that even his sister Emily, although the most indulgent person in the world, and very fond of her brother, grew so tired of hearing him that she could not help saying "I wish to-morrow were come too!"

And at last, as generally happens, whether we wish for it or not, to-morrow did come, as brilliant a to-morrow as ever was anticipated, even by a school-boy in the holidays. The sun rose without a cloud; I speak from the best authority, for "scorning the scorner sleep" Horace was up before him; and the ball being

twenty times weighed, and the bats fifty times examined, he repaired, by half-past nine, to Sandleford Common, where the match was to be played, and the wickets pitched precisely at ten o'clock.

All parties were sufficiently punctual; and when the whole set had assembled, Horace found, that in spite of his calculations, a mistake had arisen in the amount of his forces; that reckoning himself there were ten Aberleigh boys on the ground, besides the two foreign allies, proceeding, perhaps, from the over-anxiety to collect recruits,—whilst his Sandleford captain, on the contrary, had neglected to secure another mate as agreed on, and could only muster the original ten of his own parish, himself included.

In this dilemma the umpires immediately proposed to divide the auxiliaries, a suggestion to which George assented with his usual sang froid, and Charles with his invariable good-humour.

"You had better toss up for me," said the former. "For the choice," was Horace's civil amendment, and toss they did. "Heads!" cried he of Sandleford, and heads it was; and partly caught by the young gentleman's happy knack of puffing himself, partly by the knowing manner in which he was handling his bat, George was instantly claimed by the winner, and the game began.

Sandleford went in, and it was desired that the stranger and the best of the home party should take the precedence. But our great player coquetted. "It might put their side out of spirits if by any accident he were out early in the game; he had seen a match lost, by Mr. Budd or Saunders having their wickets knocked down sooner than was expected. He would wait." Accordingly it was not till the first four had gone down with only twenty notches gained that he at last went in, "to retrieve," as he said, the fortune of the day.

Nothing could be more imposing than his appearance. There he stood at the wicket striking his bat against the ground with impatience, pawing the earth as it were, like a race-horse at the starting-post, or a greyhound in the slips, and friends and foes admired and wondered. Even Horace Lucas felt the effect of the fine attitude and the brilliant animation, and delivered his ball less steadily than usual, anticipating that his opponent would get at least three runs. His fears were soon quieted. "By some accident" (to use the young gentleman's own phrase) Mr. George hit up; and that exceedingly bad field, his cousin Charles, caught him out without a notch.

This misadventure sadly disconcerted Sandleford as well as the unfortunate champion, and put Aberleigh in high spirits. Horace bowled better than ever; the fielding was excellent; and the whole eleven were out for forty-seven notches—a wretched innings.

Aberleigh then went in; Horace, and at Horace's request, his ally Charles:—George being one of the bowlers. But poor George (to borrow once more his own words) was "out of luck, thoroughly out of luck," for in spite of all his efforts the two mates got fifty-six before they parted, and the whole score was a hundred and nine.

Eighty-two a-head in the first innings! Small hopes for Sandleford, even though George went in immediately, "determined," as he said, "to conquer fortune." Small hopes for Sandleford!

"Come, Charles," said Horace Lucas, "let us see whether your bowling may not be as good as your batting. Just give your cousin one ball." And at the very first ball the stumps rattled, and the discomfited cricketer slunk away, amidst the crowing of his antagonists and the reproaches of his mates, so crest-fallen, that even Horace was touched by his disconsolate countenance and humbled air. His tender-hearted cousin felt a still deeper sympathy, and almost lamented his own success.

"It is all luck, sir," said he, in answer to a compliment from General Lucas, who stood talking to him after the match had been triumphantly won; "It is all luck! Poor George is a far better player than I am; he was so yesterday, and will be so to-morrow. This is merely the fortune of a day, a trifle not worth a word or a thought!"

"The object is trifling, I grant you, my good young friend," said the General, "and luck may have had some share in the victory; but I am much mistaken if your success and your cousin's mortification be not of essential benefit to both. It is one of the most salutary parts of the world's discipline, that modesty should triumph and that Pride should have a Fall."

ROSEDALE.

I DON'T know how it happened when we were house-hunting the other day, that nobody ever thought of Rosedale. I should have objected to it, both as out of distance—it 's a good six miles off; and as being utterly unrecommendable by one rational person to another. Rosedale! the very name smacks of the Minerva Press, and gives token of the nonsense and trumpery thereunto belonging. Rosedale Cottage! the man who, under that portentous title takes that house, cannot complain of lack of warning.

Nevertheless is Rosedale one of the prettiest cottages that ever sprung into existence in brick or on paper. All strangers go to see it, and few "cots of spruce gentility" are so well worth seeing. Fancy a low irregular white rough-cast building thatched with reeds, co-

vered with roses, clematis, and passion-flowers, standing on a knoll of fine turf, amidst flower-beds and shrubberies and magnificent elms, backed by an abrupt hill, and looking over lawny fields to a green common, which is intersected by a gay high road, dabbled with ponds of water, and terminated by a pretty village edging off into rich woodlands: imagine this picture of a place tricked out with ornaments of all sorts, conservatories, roseries, rustic seats, American borders, Gothic dairies, Spanish hermitages, and flowers stuck as close as pins in a pincushion, with every thing, in short, that might best become the walls of an exhibition room, or the back scene of a play: conceive the interior adorned in a style of elegance still more fanciful, and it will hardly appear surprising that this "unique bijou," as the advertisement calls it, should seldom want a tenant. The rapid succession of these occupiers is the more extraordinary matter. Every body is willing to come to Rosedale, but nobody stays.

For this, however, it is not difficult to assign very sufficient cause. In the first place, the house has the original sin of most ornamented cottages, that of being built on the foundation of a real labourer's dwelling; by which notable piece of economy the owner saved some thirty pounds, at the expense of making half his rooms mere nut-shells, and the house incurably damp,—to say nothing of the inconvenience of the many apartments which were erected as after-thoughts, the addenda of the work, and are only to be come at by out-side passages and French window-doors. Secondly, that necessary part of a two-story mansion, the staircase, was utterly forgotten by architect, proprietor, and builder, and never missed by any person, till the ladder being one day taken away at the dinner hour, an Irish labourer, accidentally left behind, was discovered by the workmen on their return, perched like a bird on the top of the roof, he having taken the method of going up the chimney as the quickest way of getting down. This adventure occasioned a call for the staircase, which was at length inserted by the by, and is as much like a step-ladder in a dark corner as any thing well can be.* Thirdly and lastly, this beautiful abode is in every way most thoroughly inconvenient and uncomfortable. In the winter one might find as much protection in the hollow of a tree—cold, gusty, sleety, wet; snow threatening from above like an avalanche; water gushing up from below like a fountain; a house of card-paper would be the solider refuge, a gipsy's tent by far the more snug. In summer it is proportionably close and hot, giving little shade and no shelter; and all the year round it is overdone with frippery and finery, a toy-shop in action, a Brobdignagian baby-house.

Every room is in masquerade: the saloon Chinese, full of jars and mandarins and pagodas; the library Egyptian, all covered with hieroglyphics, and swarming with furniture crocodiles and sphynxes. Only think of a crocodile couch, and a sphynx sofa! They sleep in Turkish tents, and dine in a Gothic chapel.† Now English ladies and gentlemen in their every-day apparel look exceedingly out of place amongst such mummery. The costume wont do. It is not in keeping. Besides, the properties themselves are apt to get shifted from one scene to another, and all manner of anomalies are the consequence. The mitred chairs and screens of the chapel, for instance, so very upright, and tall, and carved, and priestly, were mixed up oddly enough with the squat Chinese bonzes; whilst by some strange transposition a pair of nodding mandarins figured amongst the Egyptian monsters, and by the aid of their supernatural ugliness really looked human.

Then the room taken up by the various knicknackery, the unnamed and unnameable generation of gew-gaws! It always seemed to me to require more house-maids than the house would hold. And the same with the garden. You are so begirt with garlands and festoons, flowers above and flowers below, that you walk about under a perpetual sense of trespass, of taking care, of doing mischief, now bobbing against a sweet-briar, in which rencontre you have the worst; now flapped in the face by a woodbine to the discomfiture of both parties, now revenging these vegetable wrongs by tripping up an unfortunate balsam; bonnets, coatskirts and flounces in equal peril! The very gardeners step gingerly, and tuck their aprons tightly round them before they venture into that fair demesne of theirs, which is, so to say, over-peopled. In short, Rosedale is a place to look at, rather than live in; a fact which will be received without dispute by some score of tenants, by the proprietor of the county newspaper who keeps the advertisement of this matchless villa constantly set, to his no small emolument, and by the neighbourhood at large, to whom the succession of new faces, new liveries, and new equipages driving about our rustic lanes, and sometimes occupying a very tasty pew in the parish church, has long supplied a source of conversation as unfailing and as various as the weather.

The first person who ascertained, by pain-

* This instance of forgetfulness is not unexampled. A similar accident is said to have happened to Madame d'Arblay in the erection of a cottage built from the profits of her admirable Camilla.

† Some of the pleasantest days of my life have been spent in a house so furnished. But then it was of fitting dimensions, and the delightful persons to whom it belonged had a house in London, and a mansion in the country, and used their fancy villa much as one would use a marquee or a pleasure-boat, for gay parties in fine weather. Rosedale, unlucky place, was built to be lived in.

ful experience, that Rosedale was uninhabitable, was the proprietor, a simple young man from the next town, who unluckily took it into his head that he had a taste for architecture and landscape gardening, and so forth; and falling into the hands of a London upholsterer and a country nurseryman, produced the effort of genius that I have endeavoured to describe. At the end of a month he found that nobody could live there; and with the advice of the nurseryman and the upholsterer began to talk of re-building and new-modelling; nay, he actually went so far as to send for the bricklayer; but fortunately for our man of taste he had a wife of more sense than himself, who seized the moment of disappointment to disgust him with improvements and improvers, in which feat she was greatly aided by the bills of his late associates; put a stop at once to his projects and his complaints: removed with all speed to their old residence, an ugly, roomy, comfortable red brick house in the market-place at B——; drew up a flaming advertisement, and turned the grumbling occupant into a thriving landlord. Lucky for him was the day in which William Walker, Esquire, married Miss Bridget Tomkins, second daughter of Mr. Samuel Tomkins, attorney at law! And lucky for Mr. Samuel Tomkins was the hour in which he acquired a son-in-law more profitable in the article of leases than the two lords to whom he acted as steward both put together!

First on the list of tenants was a bride and bridegroom come to spend the early months of their nuptial life in this sweet retirement. They arrived towards the end of August with a great retinue of servants, horses, dogs, and carriages, well bedecked with bridal favours. The very pointers had white ribbons round their necks, so splendid was their rejoicing, and had each, as we were credibly informed, eaten a huge slice of wedding-cake when the happy couple returned from church. The bride, whom every body except myself called plain, and whom I thought pretty, had been a great heiress, and had married for love the day she came of age. She was slight of form and pale of complexion, with a profusion of brown hair, mild hazel eyes, a sweet smile, a soft voice, and an air of modesty that clung about her like a veil. I never saw a more loveable creature. He was dark and tall and stout and bold, with an assured yet gentlemanly air, a loud voice, a confident manner, and a real passion for shooting. They stayed just a fortnight, during which time he contrived to get warned off half the manors in the neighbourhood, and cut down the finest elm in the lawn one wet morning to open a view of the high road. I hope the marriage has turned out a happy one, for she was a sweet gentle creature. I used to see her leaning over the gate watching his return from shooting with such a fond patience! And her bound to meet him when he did appear! And the pretty coaxing playfulness with which she patted and chided her rivals the dogs! Oh I hope she is happy! but I fear, I fear.

Next succeeded a couple from India, before whom floated reports golden and gorgeous as the clouds at sunset. Inexhaustible riches; profuse expenditure; tremendous ostentation; unheard-of luxury; ortolans; beccaficos; French-beans at Christmas; green-peas at Easter; strawberries always; a chariot and six; twelve black footmen; and parrots and monkeys beyond all count. These were amongst the most moderate of the rumours that preceded them; and every idle person in the country was preparing to be a hanger-on; and every shop-keeper in B. on the watch for a customer; when up drove a quiet-looking old gentleman in a pony-chaise, with a quiet-looking old lady at his side, and took possession, their retinue following in a hack post-chaise. Whether the habits of this Eastern Crœsus corresponded with his modest debût, or his magnificent reputation, we had not time to discover, although from certain indications, I conceive that much might be said on both sides. They arrived in the middle of a fine October, while the China roses covered the walls, and the China-asters, and dahlias, and fuchsias, and geraniums in full blow, gave a summer brilliancy to the lawn; but scarcely had a pair of superb Common-prayer-books, bound in velvet, and a bible with gold clasps entered in possession of the pew at church, before "there came a frost, a nipping frost," which turned the China-asters, and the China-roses brown, and the dahlias and geraniums black, and the nabob and the nabobess blue. They disappeared the next day, and have never been seen or heard of since.

Then arrived a fox-hunting Baronet, with a splendid stud and a splendid fortune. A young man, a single man, a handsome man! Every speculating mamma in the country fixed her eyes on Sir Robert for a son-in-law; papas were sent to call; brothers were enjoined to go out hunting, and get acquainted; nay, even certain of the young ladies themselves (I grieve to say it!) showed symptoms of condescension which might almost have made their grandmothers start from their graves. But what could they do? How could they help it, poor pretty things? The Baronet, with the instinct of a determined bachelor, avoided a young lady as a sparrow does a hawk, and discovering this shyness, they followed their instinct as the hawk would do in a similar case, and pursued the coy bird. It was what sportsmen call a fine open season, which being translated, means every variety of wintry weather except frost—dirty, foggy, sleety, wet; so such of our belles as looked well on horse-back, took the opportunity to ride, to cover and see the hounds throw off; and such as shone more as pedestrians would

take an early walk, exquisitely dressed, for their health's sake, towards the general rendezvous. Still Sir Robert was immovable. He made no morning calls, accepted no invitations, spoke to no mortal till he had ascertained that there was neither sister, daughter, aunt, nor cousin in the case. He kept from every petticoat as if it contained the contagion of the plague, shunned ball-rooms and drawing-rooms, as if they were pest-houses, and finally, had the comfort of leaving Rosedale without having even bowed to a female during his stay. The final cause of his departure has been differently reported; some hold that he was frightened away by Miss Amelia Singleton, who had nearly caused him to commit involuntary homicide, (is that the word for killing a woman?) by crossing and recrossing before his hunter in Sallow-field-lane, thereby putting him in danger of a coroner's inquest; whilst others assert that his landlord, Mr. Walker, happening to call one day, found his tenant in dirty boots on the sphynx sofa, and a Newfoundland dog, dripping with mud, on the crocodile couch, and gave him notice to quit on the spot. For my part I regard this legend as altogether apocryphal, invented to save the credit of the house by assuming that one of its many inhabitants was turned out, contrary to his own wish. My faith goes entirely with the Miss Amelia version of the history; the more so, as that gentle damsel was so inconsolable as to marry a former beau, a small Squire of the neighbourhood, rather weather-beaten, and not quite so young as he had been, within a month after she had the ill luck not to be run over by Sir Robert.

However that may have been, "thence ensued a vacancy" in Rosedale, which was supplied the same week by a musical family, a travelling band, drums, trumpets, harps, pianos, violins, violincellos, trombones, and German flutes—noise personified! an incarnation of din! The family consisted of three young ladies who practised regularly six hours a day; a governess who played on some instrument or other from morning till night; one fluting brother; one fiddling ditto; a violincelloing music-master; and a singing papa. The only quiet person among them, the "one poor half-penny-worth of bread to this monstrous quantity of sack," was the unfortunate mamma, sole listener, as it seemed, of her innumerous choir. Oh, how we pitied her! She was a sweet placid-looking woman, and younger in appearance than either of her daughters, with a fair open forehead, full dark eyes, lips that seemed waiting to smile, a deep yet cool colour, and a heavenly composure of countenance, resembling in features, expression, and complexion, the small Madonnas of Raphael. We never ceased to wonder at her happy serenity until we found out that the good lady was deaf, a discovery which somewhat diminished the ardour of our admiration. How this enviable calamity befell her, I did not hear,—but of course that din! The very jars and mandarins cracked under the incessant vibration; I only wonder that the poor house did not break the drum of its ears; did not burst from its own report, and explode like an overloaded gun. One could not see that unlucky habitation half a mile off, without such a feeling of noise as comes over one in looking at Hogarth's enraged musician. To pass it was really dangerous. One stage-coach was overturned, and two post-chaises ran away in consequence of their uproarious doings; and a sturdy old-fashioned country gentleman, who rode a particularly anti-musical, startlish, blood-horse, began to talk of indicting Rosedale as a nuisance, when just at the critical moment, its tenants had the good fortune to discover, that although the hermitage with its vaulted roof made a capital concert-room, yet that there was not space enough within doors for their several practisings, that the apartments were too small, and the partitions too thin, so that concord was turned into discord, and harmonies went crossing each other all over the house—Mozart jostled by Rossini, and Handel put down by Weber. And away they went also.

Our next neighbours were two ladies, not sisters, except as one of them said in soul; kindred spirits determined to retire from the world, and emulate in this sweet retreat the immortal friendship of the ladies of Llangollen.* The names of our pair of friends were Jackson and Jennings, Miss Laura Jackson (I wonder whether Laura really was her name! She signed herself so in prose and in verse, and would certainly for more reasons than one have disliked an appeal to the Register! besides, she ought to know; so Laura it shall be!) Miss Laura Jackson and Miss Barbara Jennings, commonly called Bab. Both were of that unfortunate class of young ladies, whom the malicious world is apt to call old maids; both rich, both independent, and both in the fullest sense of the word cockneys. Laura was tall and lean, and scraggy and yellow, dressing in an Arcadian sort of way, pretty much like an opera shepherdess without a crook, singing pastoral songs prodigiously out of tune, and talking in a deep voice, with much emphasis and astounding fluency all sorts of sentimentalities all the day long.

*I need not, I trust, disclaim any intention of casting the lightest shade of ridicule on the remarkable instance of female friendship to which I have alluded in the text. An union enduring as that has done, from youth to age, adorned by rank, talent, and beauty, cemented by cheerfulness and good-humour, and consecrated by benevolence and virtue, can fear no one's censure, and soars far beyond my feeble praise. Such a friendship is the very poetry of life. But the heartless imitation, the absurd parody of the noble and elevating romance, is surely fair game, the more so, as it tends like all parodies to bring the original into undeserved disrepute.

Miss Barbara on the other hand was short and plump and round-faced and ruddy, inclining to vulgarity as Laura to affectation, with a great love of dancing, a pleasant chuckling laugh, and a most agreeable habit of assentation. Altogether Bab was a likeable person in spite of some nonsense, which is more than could honestly be said for her companion.

Juxtaposition laid the corner-stone of this immortal friendship, which had already lasted four months and a half, and cemented by resemblance of situation, and dissimilarity of character, really bade fair to continue some months longer. Both had been heartily weary of their previous situations: Laura keeping house for a brother in Aldersgate-street, where as she said she was overwhelmed by odious vulgar business; Barbara living with an aunt on Fish-street Hill, where she was tired to death of having nothing to do. Both had a passion for the country. Laura, who, except one jaunt to Margate, had never been out of the sound of Bow-bell, that she might ruralize after the fashion of the poets, sit under trees and gather roses all day long; Bab, who in spite of yearly trips to Paris and Brussels and Amsterdam and Brighton, had hardly seen a green field except through a coach-window, was on her side possessed with a mania for notability and management; *she yearned to keep cows*, fatten pigs, breed poultry, grow cabbages, make hay, brew and bake, and wash and churn. Visions of killing her own mutton flitted over her delighted fancy; and when one evening at a ball in the Borough her favourite partner had deserted her to dance with her niece, and Miss Laura, who had been reading Miss Seward's letters, proposed to her to retire from the world and its vanities in imitation of the illustrious recluses of Llangollen, Miss Barbara, caught above all things with the prospect of making her own butter every morning for breakfast,* acceded to the proposal most joyfully.

The vow of friendship was taken, and nothing remained but to look out for a house. Barbara wanted a farm, Laura a cottage; Barbara talked of cows and clover, Laura of nightingales and violets; Barbara sighed for Yorkshire pastures, Laura for Welsh mountains; and the scheme seemed likely to go off for want of an habitation, when Rosedale in all the glory of advertisement shone on Miss Laura in the Morning Post, and was immediately engaged by the delighted friends on a lease of seven, fourteen, or one-and-twenty years.

It was a raw blowy March evening, when the fair partners arrived at the cottage. Miss Laura made a speech in her usual style on taking possession, an invocation to friendship and rural nature, and a deprecation of cities, society and men; at the conclusion of which Miss Barbara underwent an embrassade; and having sufficiently admired the wonders within they sallied forth with a candle and lanthorn to view their ruralities without. Miss Laura was better satisfied with this ramble than her companion. She found at least trees and primroses, whilst the country felicities of ducks and chickens were entirely wanting. Bab, however, reconciled the matter by supposing they were gone to roost, and a little worn out by the journey wisely followed their example.

The next day saw Miss Laura obliged to infringe her own most sacred and inviolable rule, and admit a man—the apothecary—into this maiden abode. She had sate under a tree the night before listening not to, but for a nightingale, and was laid up by a most unpastoral fit of the rheumatism. Barbara in the meanwhile was examining her territory by day-light, and discovering fresh cause of vexation at every step. Here she was in the country, in a cottage "comprising," as the advertisement set forth, "all manner of convenience and accommodation," without grass or corn, or cow or sheep, or pig or chicken, or turkey or goose;—no laundry, no brew-house, no pig-stye, no poultry-yard! not a cabbage in the garden! not a useful thing about the house! Imagine her consternation!

But Barbara was a person of activity and resource. She sallied out forthwith to the neighbouring village, bought utensils and live stock; turned the coach-house into a cow-stall; projected a pig-sty in the rosery; installed her ducks and geese in the orangery; introduced the novelty of real milk-pans, churns and butter-prints amongst the old china, Dutch-tiles and stained glass of that make-believe toy the Gothic dairy; placed her brewing vessels in 'the housekeeper's room,' which to accord with the genius of the place had been fitted up to represent a robber's cave; deposited her washing-tubs in the butler's pantry, which with a similar regard to congruity had been decorated with spars and shells like a Nereid's grotto; and finally, in spite of all warning and remonstrance, drove her sheep into the shrubbery, and tethered her cows upon the lawn.

This last stroke was too much for the gardener's patience. He betook himself in all haste to B. to apprise Mr. Walker; and Mr. Walker armed with Mr. Samuel Tompkins and a copy of the lease made his appearance with breathless speed at Rosedale. Barbara, in spite of her usual placidity, made good battle on this occasion. She cried and scolded and reasoned and implored; it was as much as Mr. Walker, and Mr. Samuel Tomkins, aided by their mute witness the lease, and that very clamorous auxiliary the gardener, could do to out-talk her. At last, however, they were victorious. Poor Miss Bab's live stock were forced to make a rapid retreat, and

* Vide Anna Seward's Correspondence.

she would probably have marched off at the same time, had not an incident occurred which brought her visions of rural felicity much nearer to reality than could have been anticipated by the liveliest imagination.

The farmer's wife of whom she had made her purchases, and to whom she unwillingly addressed herself to resume them, seeing to use her own words, "how much Madam seemed to take on at parting with the poor dumb things," kindly offered to accommodate them as boarders at a moderate stipend, volunteering also lessons in the chicken-rearing and pig-feeding department, of which the lady did to be sure stand rather in need.

Of course Barbara closed with this proposal at a word. She never was so happy in her life; her cows, pigs, and poultry, en pension, close by, where she might see them every hour if she liked, and she herself with both hands full, learning at the farm, and ordering at the cottage, and displaying all that can be imagined of ignorance and good-humour at both.

Her mistakes were innumerable. Once for instance, she carried away by main force from a turkey, whose nest she had the ill-luck to discover, thirteen eggs, just ready to hatch, and after a severe combat with the furious and injured hen, brought them home to Rosedale as fresh-laid—under a notion rather new in natural history, that turkeys lay all their eggs in one day. Another time she discovered a hoard of choice double-dahlia roots in a tool-house belonging to her old enemy the gardener, and delivered them to the cook for Jerusalem artichokes, who dressed them as such accordingly. No end to Barbara's blunders! but her good-humour, her cheerfulness, her liberality, and the happy frankness with which she laughed at her own mistakes, carried her triumphantly through. Every body liked her, especially a smug little curate who lodged at the very farm-house where her pigs and cattle were boarded, and said twenty times a day that Miss Barbara Jennings was the pleasantest woman in England. Barbara was never so happy in her life.

Miss Laura, on her part, continued rheumatic and poorly, and kept closely to her bedchamber, the Turkish tent, with no other consolations than novels from the next town and the daily visits of the apothecary. She was shocked at Miss Barbara's intimacy with the farm people, and took every opportunity of telling her so. Barbara, never very fond of her fair companion's harangues, and not the more reconciled to them from their being directed against her own particular favourites, ran away as often as she could. So that the two friends had nearly arrived at the point of not speaking, when they met one afternoon by mutual appointment in the Chinese saloon. Miss Barbara blushed and looked silly, and seemed trying to say something which she could not bring out. Miss Laura tried to blush rather unsuccessfully. She however could talk at all times, her powers of speech were never known to fail; and at the end of an oration in which she proved, as was pretty evident, that they had been mistaken in supposing the company of each all-sufficient to the other as well as in their plan of seclusion from the world, she invited Miss Barbara, after another vain attempt at a blush, to pay the last honours to their friendship by attending her to the hymeneal altar, whither she had promised to accompany Mr. Opodeldoc on the morning after the next.

"I can't," replied Miss Barbara.

"And why not?" resumed Miss Laura. "Surely Mr. Opodel——"

"Now, don't be angry!" interrupted our friend Bab. "I can't be your bridemaid the day after to-morrow, because I am going to be married to-morrow myself."

And so they left Rosedale, and I shall leave them.

WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

Nov. 6.—The weather is as peaceful to-day, as calm, and as mild, as in early April; and, perhaps, an autumn afternoon and a spring morning do resemble each other more in feeling, and even in appearance, than any two periods of the year. There is in both the same freshness and dewiness of the herbage; the same balmy softness in the air; and the same pure and lovely blue sky, with white fleecy clouds floating across it. The chief difference lies in the absence of flowers, and the presence of leaves. But then the foliage of November is so rich, and glowing, and varied, that it may well supply the place of the gay blossoms of the spring; whilst all the flowers of the field or the garden could never make amends for the want of leaves—that beautiful and graceful attire in which nature has clothed the rugged forms of trees—the verdant drapery to which the landscape owes its loveliness, and the forests their glory.

If choice must be between two seasons, each so full of charm, it is at least no bad philosophy to prefer the present good, even whilst looking gratefully back, and hopefully forward to the past and the future. And, of a surety, no fairer specimen of a November day could well be found than this,—a day made to wander

> "By yellow commons and birch-shaded hollows,
> And hedgerows bordering unfrequented lanes;"

nor could a prettier country be found for our walk than this shady and yet sunny Berkshire,

where the scenery, without rising into grandeur or breaking into wildness, is so peaceful, so cheerful, so varied, and so thoroughly English.

We must bend our steps towards the water side, for I have a message to leave at Farmer Riley's: and sooth to say, it is no unpleasant necessity; for the road thither is smooth and dry, retired, as one likes a country walk to be, but not too lonely, which women never like; leading past the Loddon — the bright, brimming, transparent Loddon—a fitting mirror for the bright blue sky, and terminating at one of the prettiest and most comfortable farmhouses in the neighbourhood.

How beautiful the lane is to-day, decorated with a thousand colours! The brown road, and the rich verdure that borders it, strewed with the pale yellow leaves of the elm, just beginning to fall; hedge-rows glowing with long wreaths of the bramble in every variety of purplish red; and overhead the unchanged green of the fir, contrasting with the spotted sycamore, the tawny beech, and the dry sere leaves of the oak, which rustle as the light wind passes through them: a few common hardy yellow flowers (for yellow is the common colour of flowers, whether wild or cultivated, as blue is the rare one,) flowers of many sorts, but almost of one tint, still blowing in spite of the season, and ruddy berries glowing through all. How very beautiful is the lane!

And how pleasant is this hill where the road widens, with the group of cattle by the way side, and George Hearn, the little post-boy, trundling his hoop at full speed, making all the better haste in his work, because he cheats himself into thinking it play! And how beautiful again, is this patch of common at the hill top with the clear pool, where Martha Pither's children,—elves of three, and four, and five years old, — without any distinction of sex in their sunburnt faces and tattered drapery, are dipping up water in their little homely cups shining with cleanliness, and a small brown pitcher with the lip broken, to fill that great kettle, which, when it is filled, their united strength will never be able to lift! They are quite a group for a painter, with their rosy cheeks, and chubby hands, and round merry faces; and the low cottage in the back-ground, peeping out of its vine-leaves and China-roses, with Martha at the door, tidy, and comely, and smiling, preparing the potatoes for the pot, and watching the progress of dipping and filling that useful utensil, completes the picture.

But we must get on. No time for more sketches in these short days. It is getting cold too. We must proceed in our walk. Dash is showing us the way and beating the thick double hedge-row that runs along the side of the meadows, at a rate that indicates game astir, and causes the leaves to fly as fast as an east wind after a hard frost. Ah! a pheasant! a superb cock-pheasant! Nothing is more certain than Dash's questing, whether in a hedge-row or a covert, for a better spaniel never went into the field; but I fancied that it was a hare afoot, and was almost as much startled to hear the whirring of those splendid wings, as the princely bird himself would have been at the report of a gun. Indeed, I believe, that the way in which a pheasant goes off, does sometimes make young sportsmen a little nervous (they don't own it very readily, but the observation may be relied on nevertheless,) until they get as it were broken into the sound; and then that grand and sudden burst of wing becomes as pleasant to them as it seems to be to Dash, who is beating the hedge-row with might and main, and giving tongue louder, and sending the leaves about faster than ever—very proud of finding the pheasant, and perhaps a little angry with me for not shooting it; at least looking as if he would be angry if I were a man; for Dash is a dog of great sagacity, and has doubtless not lived four years in the sporting world without making the discovery, that although gentlemen do shoot, ladies do not.

The Loddon at last! the beautiful Loddon! and the bridge where every one stops, as by instinct, to lean over the rails, and gaze a moment on a landscape of surpassing loveliness,—the fine grounds of the Great House with their magnificent groups of limes, and firs, and poplars grander than ever poplars were; the green meadows opposite, studded with oaks and elms; the clear winding river; the mill with its picturesque old buildings bounding the scene; all glowing with the rich colouring of autumn, and harmonized by the soft beauty of the clear blue sky, and the delicious calmness of the hour. The very peasant whose daily path it is, cannot cross that bridge without a pause.

But the day is wearing fast, and it grows colder and colder. I really think it will be a frost. After all, spring is the pleasantest season, beautiful as this scenery is. We must get on. Down that broad yet shadowy lane, between the park, dark with evergreens and dappled with deer, and the meadows, where sheep, and cows, and horses, are grazing under the tall elms; that lane, where the wild bank clothed with fern, and tufted with furze, and crowned by rich-berried thorn, and thick shining holly on the one side, seems to vie in beauty with the picturesque old paling, the bright laurels, and the plumy cedars, on the other;—down that shady lane, until the sudden turn brings us to an opening where four roads meet, where a noble avenue turns down to the Great House; where the village church rears its modest spire from amidst its venerable yew-trees; and where, embosomed in orchards and gardens, and backed by barns and ricks, and all the wealth of the farm-yard, stands the spacious and comfortable abode of

good Farmer Riley, — the end and object of our walk.

And in happy time the message is said, and the answer given, for this beautiful mild day is edging off into a dense frosty evening; the leaves of the elm and the linden in the old avenue are quivering and vibrating and fluttering in the air, and at length falling crisply on the earth, as if Dash were beating for pheasants in the tree tops; the sun gleams dimly through the fog, giving little more of light or heat than his fair sister the lady moon; — I don't know a more disappointing person than a cold sun; and I am beginning to wrap my cloak closely round me, and to calculate the distance to my own fire-side, recanting all the way my praises of November, and longing for the showery flowery April as much as if I were a half-chilled butterfly, or a dahlia knocked down by the frost.

Ah dear me! what a climate this is, that one cannot keep in the same mind about it for half an hour together! I wonder by the way whether the fault is in the weather, which Dash does not seem to care for, or in me? If I should happen to be wet through in a shower next spring, and should catch myself longing for autumn, that would settle the question.

CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE.

THE TWO DOLLS.

A LUCKY day it was for little Fanny Elvington when her good aunt Delmont consented to receive her into her family, and sent for her from a fine old place, six miles from hence, Burdon Park, where she had been living with her maternal grandfather, to her own comfortable house in Brunswick Square. Poor Fanny had no natural home, her father, General Elvington, being in India with his lady; and a worse residence than the Park could hardly be devised for a little girl, since Lady Burdon was dead, Sir Richard too sickly to be troubled with children, and the care of his grand-daughter left entirely to a vulgar old nurse and a superfine housekeeper. A lucky day for Fanny was that in which she exchanged their misrule for the wise and gentle government of her good aunt Delmont.

Fanny Elvington was a nice little girl, who had a great many good qualities, and, like other little girls, a few faults; which had grown up like weeds under the neglect and mismanagement of the people at the Park, and threatened to require both time and pains to eradicate. For instance, she had a great many foolish antipathies and troublesome fears, some caught from the affectation of the housekeeper, some from the ignorance of the nurse: she shrieked at the sight of a mouse, squalled at a frog, was well-nigh ready to faint at an earwig, and quite as much afraid of a spider as if she had been a fly; she ran away from a quiet ox, as if he had been a mad bull, and had such a horror of chimney-sweepers that she shrank her head under the bed-clothes whenever she heard the deep cry of "sweep! sweep!" forerunning the old clothesman and the milkman on a frosty morning, and could hardly be persuaded to look at them, poor creatures, dressed in their tawdry tinsel and dancing round Jack of the Green on May-day. But her favourite fear, her pet aversion, was a negro; especially a little black footboy who lived next door, and whom she never saw without shrinking, and shuddering, and turning pale.

It was a most unlucky aversion for Fanny, and gave her and her aunt more trouble than all her other mislikings put together, inasmuch as Pompey came oftener in view than mouse or frog, spider or earwig, ox or chimney-sweep. How it happened nobody could tell, but Pompey was always in Fanny Elvington's way. She saw him twice as often as any one else in the house. If she went to the window, he was sure to be standing on the steps: if she walked in the Square garden, she met him crossing the pavement; she could not water her geraniums in the little court behind the house, but she heard his merry voice singing in broken English as he cleaned the knives and shoes on the other side of the wall; nay, she could not even hang out her Canary-bird's cage at the back door, but he was sure to be feeding his parrot at theirs. Go where she would, Pompey's shining black face and broad white teeth followed her: he haunted her very dreams; and the oftener she saw him, whether sleeping or waking, the more her unreasonable antipathy grew upon her. Her cousins laughed at her without effect, and her aunt's serious remonstrances were equally useless.

The person who, next to Fanny herself, suffered the most from this foolish and wicked prejudice, was poor Pompey, whose intelligence, activity, and good-humour, had made him a constant favourite in his master's house, and who had sufficient sensibility to feel deeply the horror and disgust which he had inspired in his young neighbour. At first he tried to propitiate her by bringing groundsel and chickweed for her Canary-bird, running to meet her with an umbrella when she happened to be caught in the rain, and other small attentions, which were repelled with absolute loathing.

"Me same flesh and blood with you, missy, though skin be black," cried poor Pompey one day when pushed to extremity by Fanny's disdain, "same flesh and blood, missy!" a fact which the young lady denied with more than usual indignation; she looked at her own white skin, and she thought of his black one; and all the reasoning of her aunt failed to con-

vince her, that where the outside was so different, the inside could by possibility be alike. At last Mrs. Delmont was fain to leave the matter to the great curer of all prejudices, called Time, who in this case seemed even slower in his operations than usual.

In the meanwhile, Fanny's birthday approached, and as it was within a few days of that of her cousin Emma Delmont, it was agreed to celebrate the two festivals together. Double feasting! double holiday! double presents! never was a gayer anniversary. Mrs. Delmont's own gifts had been reserved to the conclusion of the jollity, and after the fruit was put on the table, two huge dolls, almost as big as real babies, were introduced to the little company. They excited and deserved universal admiration. The first was a young lady of the most delicate construction and the most elaborate ornament; a doll of the highest fashion, with sleeves like a bishop, a waist like a wasp, a magnificent bustle, and petticoats so full and so puffed out round the bottom, that the question of hoop or no hoop was stoutly debated between two of the elder girls. Her cheeks were very red, and her neck very white, and her ringlets in the newest possible taste. In short, she was so completely *à la mode* that a Parisian milliner might have sent her as a pattern to her fellow-tradeswoman in London, or the London milliner might have returned the compliment to her sister artist over the water. Her glories, however, were fated to be eclipsed. The moment that the second doll made its appearance, the lady of fashion was looked at no longer.

The second doll was a young gentleman, habited in the striped and braided costume which is the ordinary transition dress of boys between leaving off petticoats and assuming the doublet and hose. It was so exactly like Willy Delmont's own attire, that the astonished boy looked at himself, to be sure that the doll had not stolen the clothes off his back. The apparel, however, was not the charm that fixed the attention of the young people; the attraction was the complexion, which was of as deep and shining a black, as perfect an imitation of a negro, in tint and feature, as female ingenuity could accomplish. The face, neck, arms, and legs were all covered with black silk; and much skill was shown in shaping and sewing on the broad flat nose, large ears and pouting lips, whilst the great white teeth and bright round eyes relieved the monotony of the colour. The wig was of black worsted, knitted and then unravelled, as natural as if it had actually grown on the head. Perhaps the novelty (for none of the party had seen a black doll before) might increase the effect, but they all declared that they had never seen so accurate an imitation, so perfect an illusion. Even Fanny, who at first sight had almost taken the doll for her old enemy Pompey in little, and had shrunk back accordingly, began at last to catch some of the curiosity (for curiosity is a catching passion) that characterized her companions. She drew near—she gazed—at last she even touched the doll, and listened with some interest to Mrs. Delmont's detail of the trouble she found in constructing the young lady and gentleman.

"What are they made of, aunt?"

"Rags, my dear!" was the reply: "nothing but rags," continued Mrs. Delmont, unripping a little of the black gentleman's foot and the white lady's arm, and showing the linen of which they were composed;—"both alike, Fanny," pursued her good aunt, "both the same colour underneath the skin, and both the work of the same hand—like Pompey and you," added she more solemnly; "and now choose which doll you will."

And Fanny, blushing and hesitating, chose the black one; and the next day her aunt had the pleasure to see her show it to Pompey over the wall, to his infinite delight; and, in a very few days, Mrs. Delmont had the still greater pleasure to find that Fanny Elvington had not only overcome and acknowledged her prejudice, but had given Pompey a new half-crown, and had accepted groundsel for her Canary-bird from the poor negro boy.

Note.—About a month after sitting to me for his portrait, the young black gentleman whom I have endeavoured to describe (I do not mean Pompey but the doll,) set out upon his travels. He had been constructed in this little Berkshire of ours for some children in the great county of York, and a friend of mine travelling northward had the goodness to offer him a place in her carriage for the journey. My friend was a married woman accompanied by her husband and another lady, and finding the doll cumbersome to pack, wrapped it in a large shawl and carried it in her lap baby fashion. At the first inn where they stopped to dine, she handed it carelessly out of the carriage before alighting, and was much amused to see it received with the grave officious tenderness usually shown to a real infant by the nicely-dressed hostess, whose consternation, when, still taking it for a living child, she caught a glimpse of the complexion, is said to have been irresistibly ludicrous. Of course my friend did not undeceive her. Indeed I believe she humoured the mistake wherever it occurred all along the north road, to the unspeakable astonishment and mystification of chamber-maids and waiters.

HOPPING BOB.

It was on a rainy day, late in last November, that Mrs. Villars came to take possession of her new residence, called the Lodge, a pretty house about ten miles off, situated within the boundaries of Oakhampstead Park, the pleasant demesne of her brother-in-law, Sir Arthur Villars, and generally appropriated to the use of some dowager of that ancient and wealthy race.

Mrs. Villars was an elderly lady of moderate fortune and excellent character. She was the widow of a dignified and richly-beneficed clergyman, who had been dead some years, and had left her with three promising sons and two pretty daughters, all of whom were now making their way in the world to her perfect satisfaction;—the daughters happily and respectably married; the sons thriving in different professions; and all of them as widely scattered as the limits of our little island could well permit;—so that their mother, disencumbered of the cares of her offspring, had nothing now to prevent her accepting Sir Arthur's kind offer of leaving the great town in which she had hitherto resided, and coming to occupy the family jointure-house at Oakhampstead. To inhabit a mansion in which so many stately matrons of the house of Villars had lived and died, was a point of dignity no less than of economy; and besides, there was no resisting so excellent an opportunity of gratifying, amidst the good Archdeacon's native shades, the taste for retirement and solitude of which she had all her life been accustomed to talk. Talk indeed she did so very much of this taste, that shrewd observers somewhat questioned its existence, and were not a little astonished when, after dallying away the summer over take-leave visits, she and her whole establishment (two maids, a pony-chaise, a tabby-cat, and her scrub, Joseph,) left C., with its society and amusements, its morning calls and evening parties, for solitude and the Lodge.

Never was place or season better calculated to bring a lover of retirement to the test. Oakhampstead, separated from our populous neighbourhood by a barrier of wild heath, was situated in the most beautiful and least inhabited part of a thinly-inhabited and beautiful county; the roads were execrable; the nearest post-town was seven miles off; the vicar was a bachelor of eighty; and the great house was shut up. There was not even one neighbour of decent station to whom she might complain of the want of a neighbourhood. Poor Mrs Villars! the last stroke too—the desertion of the park—was an unexpected calamity; for although she knew that Sir Arthur had never resided there since the death of a most beloved daughter, after which event it had been entirely abandoned, except for a few weeks in the autumn, when his only son, Harry Villars, had been accustomed to visit it for the purpose of shooting, yet she had understood that this her favourite nephew was on the point of marriage with the beautiful heiress of General Egerton, and that this fine old seat was to form the future residence of the young couple. Something she learned had now occurred to prevent an union which, a few months ago, had seemed so desirable to all parties. Some dispute between the fathers, originally trifling, but worked up into bitterness by the influence of temper; and all preparations were stopped, Harry Villars gone abroad, and the great house as much shut up as ever. Poor Mrs. Villars, who, after all her praises of retirement and her declared love of solitude, could not with any consistency run away from this "Deserted Village," was really as deserving of pity as any one guilty of harmless affectation well could be.

The good lady, however, was not wanting to herself in this emergency. She took cold, that she might summon an apothecary from the next town; and she caused her pigs to commit a trespass on the garden of a litigious farmer, that she might have an excuse for consulting the nearest attorney. Both resources failed. The medical man was one of eminent skill and high practice, whom nothing but real illness could allure into constant attendance; and the lawyer was honest, and settled the affair of the pigs at a single visit. All that either could do for her was to enumerate two or three empty houses that might possibly be filled in the course of the next summer, and two or three people who would probably call when the roads became passable; so that poor Mrs. Villars, after vainly trying to fill up her vacant hours — Alas! all her hours!—by superintending her own poultry-yard, overlooking the village-school, giving away flannel petticoats, and relieving half the old women in the parish, had very nearly made up her mind to find the Lodge disagree with her, and to return to her old quarters at C., when the arrival of a fresh inmate at the next farm-house gave an unexpected interest to her own situation.

Oakhampstead was, as I have said, a very beautiful spot. Its chief beauty consisted in a small lake or mere without the park, surrounded partly by pastoral meadow-grounds, and partly by very wild and romantic woodland scenery, amongst which grew some of the noblest oaks in the kingdom. The water did not, perhaps, cover more than thirty acres; although a length disproportioned to its breadth, a bend in the middle, and above all, the infinite variety of its shores, indented with tiny bays and jutting out into mimic promontories, gave it an appearance of much greater extent. Rides and walks had formerly been cut around it; but these were now rude and overgrown, the rustic seats decayed and fallen, and the

summer-houses covered with ivy and creeping plants. Since the absence of Sir Arthur neglect had succeeded to care; but a poet or a painter would have felt that the scene had gained in picturesqueness what it had lost in ornament. A green boat, however, and a thatched boat-house still remained in excellent preservation under the shadow of some magnificent elms; and the chimney of the boatman's cottage might just be seen peeping between the trees, over the high embankment which formed the head of the lake. The only other habitation visible from the water was an old farm-house, the abode of Farmer Ashton, whose wife, formerly the personal attendant of the late Lady Villars, had soon been found by her surviving relative to be by far the most conversible person in the place: and if the many demands on her attention, the care of men, maids, cows, calves, pigs, turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, and children, would have allowed her to devote much time to the unfortunate lady, her society would doubtless have proved a great solace and resource. But Mrs. Ashton, with all her desire to oblige Mrs. Villars, was enviably busy, and could only at short and distant intervals listen to, and, by listening, relieve the intolerable ennui of her seclusion.

Now, however, a fresh inmate had made her appearance at the farm: a young woman, whom Mrs. Ashton called Anne, and introduced as her niece; who, having much leisure (for apparently she did nothing in the family but assist in the lighter needle-work,) and evincing, as far as great modesty and diffidence would permit, her respectful sympathy with the involuntary recluse, became her favourite auditress during her frequent visits to Farmer Ashton's; and was soon sent for as a visiter (an humble visiter, for neither Mrs. Villars nor her youngest guest ever forgot the difference of their stations) at the Lodge. Seldom a day passed without Joseph and the pony-chaise being sent to fetch Anne from the farm. Nothing went well without her.

Partly, of course, the charm might be resolvable into the bare fact of getting a listener; any good listener would have been a welcome acquisition in this emergency; that is to say, any one who felt and showed a genuine sympathy with the "Fair afflicted;" but few would have been so welcome as Anne, who soon became, on the score of her own merits, a first-rate favourite with Mrs. Villars.

Whether Anne was pretty or not was a standing question in the village of Oakhampstead. Her zealous patroness answered without the slightest hesitation in the affirmative. Other people doubted. For the poorer sort her face and figure wanted showiness; whilst the young farmers and persons of that class complained that she was not, according to their notions, sufficiently genteel. Mrs. Villars's man-of-all-work, Joseph, combined both objections by declaring that Anne would be well enough if she were smarter. My readers must judge for themselves, as well at least as a pen-and-ink drawing will enable them.

Her figure was round and short, and piquante and youthful. Her face was round also, with delicate features and a most delicate complexion, as white and smooth as ivory, and just coloured enough for health. She had finely cut grey eyes, with dark eye-brows and eye-lashes, a profusion of dark hair, and a countenance so beaming with gaiety and sweetness, that the expression was always like that of other faces when they smile. Then her voice and accent were enchanting. She sang little snatches of old airs in gushes like a nightingale—freely, spontaneously, as if she could no more help singing as she went about than that "angel of the air;" and her spoken words were as musical and graceful as her songs; what she said being always sweet, gentle and intelligent; sometimes very lively and sometimes a little sad.

Her dress was neat and quiet,—plain dark gowns, fitting with great exactness, such as were equally becoming to her station and her figure; delicately white caps and habit-shirts, and the simplest of all simple straw bonnets. The only touch of finery about her was in her chaussure; the silk stockings and kid slippers in which her beautiful little feet were always clad, and in her scrupulously clean and new-looking French gloves, of the prettiest pale colours;—a piece of quaker-like and elegant extravagance, which, as well as the purity of her accent and diction, somewhat astonished Mrs. Villars, until she found from Mrs. Ashton, that Anne also had been a lady's maid, admitted early into the family, and treated almost as a companion by her young mistress.

"Where had she lived?" was the next question.

"In General Egerton's family," was the reply; and a new source of interest and curiosity was opened to the good lady, who had never seen her niece, that was to have been, and was delighted with the opportunity of making a variety of inquiries respecting herself and her connexions. Anne's answers to these questions were given with great brevity and some reluctance; she looked down and blushed, and fidgeted with a sprig of myrtle which she held in her hand, in a manner widely different from her usual lady-like composure.

"Was Miss Egerton so very handsome?"

"Oh, no!"

"So very accomplished?"

"No."

"Did Harry love her very much?"

"Yes."

"Did she love him?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Was she worthy of him?"

"No."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Villars, "I thought she was too fine a lady, too full of airs and graces! I have had my doubts of her ever since a note that she sent me, written on blue embossed paper, and smelling most atrociously of ottar of roses. I dare say Harry has had a narrow escape. Sir Arthur, even before the quarrel, said she was quite a petite maitresse. Then you think, Anne, that my nephew is better without her?"

This query caused a good deal of blushing hesitation, and nearly demolished the sprig of myrtle. On its being repeated, she said, "She did not know! she could not tell! She did not wish to speak ill of Miss Egerton; but few ladies appeared to her worthy of Mr. Villars—he was so amiable."

"Was Miss Egerton kind to her?"

"Pretty well," answered Anne quietly.

"And the General?"

"Oh, very! very!" rejoined Anne sighing deeply.

"Why did she leave the family?"

At this question poor Anne burst into tears, and the conversation ended. Mrs. Villars, unwilling to distress her favourite, did not resume it. She was already prepossessed against the Egertons by the disappointment and vexation which they had occasioned to her nephew, and had little doubt but that either the General or his daughter had behaved unjustly or unkindly to Anne.

Winter had now worn away; even those remains of winter which linger so long amidst the buds and blossoms of spring; spring itself had passed into summer, the country was every day assuming fresh charms, the roads were becoming passable, and distant neighbours were beginning to discover and to value the lady of the Lodge, who became more reconciled to her residence, varied as it now was by occasional visits to the county families, and frequent excursions with Anne upon the lake.

On these occasions they were constantly attended by the boatman, a handy, good-humoured, shock-pated fellow, of extraordinary ugliness, commonly called Bob Green, but also known by the name of "Hopping Bob;" not on account of his proficiency in that one-legged accomplishment, as the cognomen would seem to imply, but because an incurable lameness in the hip had produced a jerking sort of motion in walking, much resembling that mode of progress; and had also given a peculiar one-sided look to his short muscular figure. The hop, it must be confessed, stood much in his way on land, although he was excellent in the management of a boat; in rowing, or steering, or fishing, or any thing that had relation to the water.

A clever fellow was Bob, and a civil, and paid much attention to his lady and her young companion; and as the summer advanced, they passed more and more time on the beautiful lake, of which they continued the sole visiters; the great house being still deserted, and little known either of Sir Arthur or his son.

One afternoon, Mrs. Villars, returning unexpectedly from a distant visit, drove down to the farm, intending to spend the evening with Anne in the pleasure-boat. It was a bright sunny day towards the middle of July. The blue sky, dappled with fleecy clouds, was reflected on the calm clear water, and mingled with the shadows of the trees upon the banks, to which the sun, shining through the tall oaks, gave occasionally a transparent glitter, as of emeralds or beryls; swallows skimmed over the lake, flitting around and about, after the myriads of insects that buzzed in the summer air; the white water-lily lay in its pure beauty in the midst of its deep green leaves; the foxglove and the wild veitch were glowing in the woods; the meadow-sweet, the willow-herb, and the golden flag fringed the banks; cows stood cooling their limbs in the shallow indented bays, and a flock of sheep was lying at rest in the distant meadows.

Altogether it was a scene of sweet and soothing beauty; and Mrs. Villars was looking for Anne to partake in her enjoyment (for Anne, Mrs. Ashton had told her, was gone down to the mere,) when in a small cove at the other side of the lake, she beheld in a fine effect of sunny light, the boat, their own identical green boat, resting quietly on the water, with two persons sitting in it, seemingly in earnest conversation. One of the figures was undoubtedly Anne. Her astonished friend recognised at a glance her lead-coloured gown, her straw bonnet, and that peculiar air and attitude which gave grace and beauty to her simple dress. The other was a man, tall as it seemed, and elegant—most certainly a gentleman. Mrs. Villars even fancied that the height and bearing had a strong resemblance to her own dear nephew, Harry; and immediately a painful suspicion of the possible cause of Anne's leaving Miss Egerton forced itself upon her mind. Harry had perhaps found the lady's maid no less charming than her mistress!

A thousand trifling circumstances in favour of this opinion rushed on her recollection: Anne's blushes when Harry was accidentally named: her constant avoidance of all mention of the family in which she had resided: the great inequality of her spirits: her shrinking from the very sight of chance visiters; the emotion amounting to pain, which any remarkable instance of kindness or confidence never failed to occasion her; and above all, the many times in which, after seeming on the point of making some avowal to her kind patroness, she had drawn suddenly back: all these corroborating circumstances pressed at once with startling distinctness on Mrs. Villars's memory; and, full of care, she returned to the farm to cross-question Mrs. Ashton.

Never was examination more thoroughly unsatisfactory. Mrs. Ashton was that provoking and refractory thing, a reluctant witness. First, she disputed the facts of the case: "had Mrs. Villars seen the boat? Was she sure that she had seen it? Was it actually their own green boat? Did it really contain two persons? And was the female certainly Anne?"

All these questions being answered in the affirmative, Mrs. Ashton shifted her ground, and asserted that "If the female in question were certainly Anne, her companion must with equal certainty be the boatman, Bob Green, 'Hopping Bob,' as he was called!" and the farmer coming in at the moment, she called on him to support her assertion, which, without hearing a word of the story, he did most positively, as a dutiful and obedient husband ought to do—"Yes, for certain it must be Hopping Bob! It could be no other."

"Hopping Bob!" ejaculated Mrs. Villars, whose patience was by this time well-nigh exhausted: "Hopping Bob! when I have told you that the person in the boat was a young man, a tall man, a slim man, a gentleman! Hopping Bob, indeed!" and before the words were fairly uttered, in hopped Bob himself.

To Mrs. Villars this apparition gave unqualified satisfaction, by affording, as she declared, the most triumphant evidence of an alibi ever produced in or out of a court of justice. Her opponent, however, was by no means disposed to yield the point. She had perfect confidence in Bob's quickness of apprehension, and no very strong fear of his abstract love of truth, and determined to try the effect of a leading question. She immediately, therefore, asked him, with much significance of manner, "whether he had not just landed from the lake, and reached the farm by the short cut across the coppice?" adding "that her niece had probably walked towards the boat-house to meet Mrs. Villars, and that Bob had better go and fetch her."

This question produced no other answer than a long whistle from the sagacious boatman. Whether Mrs. Ashton over-rated his ability, or under-rated his veracity, or whether his shrewdness foresaw that detection was inevitable, and that it would "hurt his conscience to be found out," whichever were the state of the case he positively declined giving any evidence on the question; and after standing for a few moments eyeing his hostess with a look of peculiar knowingness, vented another long whistle, and hopped off again.

Mrs. Villars, all her fears confirmed, much disgusted with the farmer, and still more so with the farmer's wife, was also departing, when just as she reached the porch, she saw two persons advancing from the lake, to the house—her nephew Harry Villars, and Anne leaning on his arm!

With a countenance full of grieved displeasure, she walked slowly towards them. Harry sprang forward to meet her: "Hear me but for one moment, my dearest aunt! Listen but to four words, and then say what you will. This is my wife."

"Your wife! why I thought you loved Miss Egerton?"

"Well and this *is*, or rather happily for me this *was* Miss Egerton;" replied Henry, smiling.

"Miss Egerton!" exclaimed the amazed and half-incredulous Mrs. Villars. "Miss Egerton! Anne, that was not smart enough for Joseph, the fine lady that sent me the rose-scented note! Anne at the farm, the great heiress! My own good little Anne!"

"Ay, my dear aunt, your own Anne and my own Anne—blessings on the word! When we were parted on a foolish political quarrel between our fathers, she was sent under the care of her cousin Lady Lemingham to Florence. Lady Lemingham was much my friend. She not only persuaded Anne into marrying me privately, but managed to make the General believe that his daughter continued her inmate abroad; whilst Mrs. Ashton, another good friend of mine, contrived to receive her at home. We have been sad deceivers," continued Harry, "and at last Anne, fettered by a promise of secresy, which your kindness tempted her every moment to break, could bear the deceit no longer. She wrote to her father, and I spoke to mine; and they are reconciled, and all is forgiven. I see that you forgive us," added he, as his sweet wife lay sobbing on Mrs. Villars's bosom—"I see that you forgive *her;* and you must forgive me too, for her dear sake. Your pardon is essential to our happiness; for we are really to live at the park, and one of our first wishes must always be, that you may continue at the Great House the kindness that you have shown to Anne at the Farm."

A VISIT TO RICHMOND.

The Macadamised roads, and the light open carriages lately introduced, have so abridged, I had well-nigh said annihilated, distance in this fair island, that what used to be a journey, is now a drive; our neighbourhood has become, from a reverse reason to theirs, as extensive as that of the good people in the back settlements of America; we think nothing of thirty miles for a morning call, or forty for a dinner party; Richmond is quite within visiting distance, and London will shortly be our market-town.

This pleasant change was never so strongly impressed on my mind as by a hasty and most agreeable jaunt which I made to the former of these places during one of the few fine days

last summer. The invitation, written one day, arrived in course of post by breakfast-time the next, and without any uncomfortable hurry in packing or setting off, we were quietly dining with our kind inviters, rather before than after our usual hour, and might have returned very conveniently the same evening, had we been so minded.

There was some temptation to this exploit besides the very great one of whisking to and fro like a jack-o'lantern, and making all the village stare at our rapidity. Our road lay through the Forest, and we might have passed again by moonlight the old romantic royal town of Windsor, with its stately palace and its Shaksperian associations—I never catch a glimpse of those antique buildings, but those "Merry Wives" and all their company start up before my eyes; might have heard the night-wind rustle amongst the venerable oaks and beeches of its beautiful park; might have seen the deer couching in the fern, and the hare scudding across the glades; and as we paused to contemplate the magical effects of light and shadow which forest scenery displays at such an hour, might have seen the castle in the distance, throwing its dark masses against the sky, and looking like some stupendous work of nature, or some grand dream of Gothic architecture, rather than an actual erection of man. Every body that has seen Windsor by moonlight will understand how much one wishes to see that most striking sight again;—but our friends were not people to run away from, besides I wanted to get better acquainted with the celebrated spot where they resided:—so we staid.

"God made the Country and man made the Town!" I wonder in which of the two divisions Cowper would have placed Richmond. Every Londoner would laugh at the rustic who should call it town, and with foreigners it passes pretty generally for a sample (the only one they see) of the rural villages of England; and yet it is no more like the country, the real untrimmed genuine country, as we see it hereabouts for instance, than a garden is like a field. I do not say this in disparagement. Richmond is nature in a court-dress, but still nature,—ay, and very lovely nature too, gay and happy and elegant as one of Charles the Second's beauties, and with as little to remind one of the original penalty of labour, or poverty, or grief, or crime. I suppose that since no place on the globe is wholly exempt from their influence, care and vice may exist even there. They are, however, well hidden. The inhabitants may find them, or they may find the inhabitants, but to the casual visiter, Richmond appears as a sort of fairy land, a piece of the old Arcadia, a holiday-spot for ladies and gentlemen, where they lead a happy out-of-door life, like the gay folks in Watteau's pictures, and have nothing to do with the work-a-day world.

The principal charm of this smiling landscape is the river, the beautiful river; for the hill seems to me over-rated. That celebrated prospect is, to my eye, too woody, too leafy, too green. There is a monotony of vegetation, a heaviness. The view was finer, as I first saw it in February, when the bare branches admitted frequent glimpses of houses and villages, and the colouring was left to the fancy, than when arrayed in the pomp and garniture of "the leafy month of June." Canova said it only wanted crags. I rather incline to the old American criticism, and think that it wants clearing.

But the river! the beautiful river! there is no over-rating that. Brimming to its very banks of meadow or of garden; clear, pure and calm, as the bright summer sky, which is reflected in clearer brightness from its bosom; no praise can be too enthusiastic for that glorious stream. How gracefully it glides through the graceful bridge! And how the boats become it! And how pretty those boats are, from the small skiff of the market-woman laden with fruit and flowers, or the light-green pleasure-vessel with its white awning and its gay freight of beaux and belles, to the heavy steam-boat which comes walloping along with a regular mechanical combination of noise and motion, rumpling the quiet waters, and leaving a track of waves which vary most agreeably the level lake-like surface of the tranquil river. Certainly the Thames is the pleasantest highway in his majesty's dominions.

Some of the happiest hours I ever passed in my life were spent on its bosom in one of those sweet and shady June mornings, when the light clouds seemed as it were following the sun, and enfolding him in a thousand veils of whiter alabaster, and the soft air came loaded with fragrance from gardens which were one flush of roses and honeysuckles. I shall not easily forget that morning. Gliding along through those beautiful scenes with companions worthy of their beauty; sunk in that silence of deep enjoyment, that delicious dreaminess which looks so like thought, although in reality a much wiser and happier thing; listening half unconsciously to Emily I.'s sweet Venetian ballads, the singer and her song so suited to the scene and the hour; repeating almost unconsciously as we met the Queen-birds,

> "The swans on fair St. Mary's lake
> Float double, swan and shadow!"

just roused as we passed Pope's grotto, or the arch over Strawberry Hill; and then landing at Hampton Court, the palace of the Cartoons and of the Rape of the Lock, and coming home with my mind full of the divine Raphael and of that glorious portrait of Titian by himself, which next to the Cartoons forms the chief ornament of that regal mansion;—strangely checkered and intersected as those

strange things fancy and memory are apt to be, by vivid images of the fair Belinda, and of that inimitable game at Ombre which will live longer than any painting, and can only die with the language. There is no forgetting that morning.

Another almost as pleasant was passed in going down the river towards Kew, amongst all sorts of royal recollections, from the remains of the house of Anne of Cleves, to the lime-trees fragrant with blossom and musical with bees, under which the late king and queen used to sit of a summer evening, whilst their children were playing round them on the grass. Kew Palace is in fine harmony with this pretty family scene. One likes to think of royalty so comfortable and homely and unconstrained as it must have been in that small ugly old-fashioned house. Princes are the born thralls of splendour, and to see them eased of their cumbrous magnificence produces much such a sensation of pleasure as that which one feels in reading the fine passage of Ivanhoe, where the collar is taken from the neck of Gurth, and he leaps up a free man. At Kew, too, in those confined and ill-furnished rooms, the royal inhabitants were not without better luxuries; books accessible and readable, and looking as if they had been read, and a fine collection of cabinet pictures: superb Canaletti's; the famous Dropsical Woman on which the queen is said during her last illness to have fixed her eyes so frequently and with such an intense expression of self-pity; and a portrait of Vandyke, which rivals the Titian, the elegant Vandyke with his head over the shoulder, which has been so often engraved. What a noble race of men those great painters were! There is nothing in all their works grander or fuller of intellectual beauty than some of their own heads as we find them recorded in their portraits of themselves, or in the interesting collection of Vasari.

This remark will hardly apply to one great Painter, whose residence forms one of the many delightful associations of Richmond. Sir Joshua, who flattered all other persons, did himself so little justice, that in his own portraits he might pass for a dancing-master. His Villa is here; rich in remembrances of Johnson and Boswell and Goldsmith and Burke; here the spot where the poet Thomson used to write; here the elegant house of Owen Cambridge; close by the celebrated villa of Pope, where one seems to see again, Swift and Gay, St. John and Arbuthnot; a stone's throw off the still more celebrated gothic toy-shop Strawberry Hill, which we all know so well from the minute and vivid descriptions of its master, the most amusing of letter-writers, the most fashionable of antiquaries, the most learned of petit-maitres, the cynical finical delightful Horace Walpole; here too is Richmond Park, where Jeanie Deans and the Duke of Argyle met Queen Caroline: it has been improved unluckily, and the walk where the interview took place no longer exists. To make some amends, however,—for every thing belonging to those delicious books assumes the form of historical interest, becomes an actual reality—to compensate for this disappointment, in removing some furniture from an old house in the Town, three portraits were discovered in the wainscot, George the second, a staring likeness, between Lady Suffolk and Queen Caroline. The paintings were the worst of that bad era, but the position of the three, and the recollection of Jeanie Deans was irresistible; those pictures ought never to be separated.

But of all the celebrated villas round Richmond, none pleased me better than one which seemed so unsuited to that gay scene, that one cannot look at it without wondering how it came there. I speak of Ham House, a stately old place retired from the river, which is concealed and divided from it by rows of huge trees.

Ham House is a perfect model of the mansion of the last century, with its dark shadowy front, its steps and terraces, its marble basins, and its deep silent court, whose iron gate, as Horace Walpole used to complain, was never opened. Every thing about it belongs to the time of hoops and periwigs. Harlow Place must have been just such an abode of stateliness and seclusion. Those iron gates seem to have been erected for no other purpose than to divide Lovelace from Clarissa; they look so stern and so unrelenting. We almost expect to see her through them sweeping slowly along the terrace-walk in the pure dignity of her swan-like beauty, with her jealous sister watching her from a window; and we look for him, too, at the corner of the wall waiting to deposite a letter and listening with a speaking eagerness to the rustle of her silk gown. If there were any Clarissas now-a-days, they would certainly be found at Ham House. And the keeping is so perfect. The very flowers are old-fashioned. No American borders, no kalmias or azaleas or magnolias, or such heathen shrubs! No flimsy China roses! Nothing new-fangled! None but flowers of the olden time, arranged in gay formal knots, staid and prim and regular, and without a leaf awry. Add but round Dutch honeysuckles, and I dare say that Fletcher's beautiful song, which I shall borrow to conclude my description, might comprise the whole catalogue.

"Roses their sharp spines being gone,
Not royal in their smell alone,
But in their hue;
Virgin pinks of odours faint,
Daisies smell-less but most quaint,
And sweet Thyme true.

Primrose first-born child of Ver,
Merry springtime's harbinger,

With her bells dim,
Oxslips in their cradles growing,
Marigolds on death-beds blowing,
*Lark-heels trim."

GHOST STORIES.

Superstition has fallen woefully into decay in our enlightened country. Sunday-schools and spinning-jennies, steam-engines, and Mac-Adam roads, to say nothing of that mightiest and most diffusive of all powers, the Press, have chased away the spirit of credulity, as ghosts are said to be scared by the dawn, so that if a second Sir Thomas Browne were to appear amongst us, we should be forced to send him to Germany for that class of "Vulgar Errors," the old saws and nursery legends, which once formed a sort of supplement to the national faith, an apocrypha as ancient and as general as our language. Not only have we discarded the more gross and gloomy creations of an ignorant fear, the wizards, witches and demons of the middle ages, but we have also divested ourselves of the more genial and every-day phantasies, the venerable and conventional errors—pleasant mistakes at least if mistakes they were—which succeeded to them. Who now hails his good fortune if he meet two magpies, or bewails his evil destiny if he see but one? Who is in or out of spirits according as the concave cinder which does him the honour to jump from the fire on his foot be long or round—a coffin or a purse? Who looks in the candles for expected letters, or searches the tea-cups for coming visiters? Who shrinks from being helped to salt as if one were offering him arsenic, or is wretched if a knife and fork be laid across his plate? Who if his neighbour chance to sneeze, thinks it a bounden duty to cry God bless him? Who tells his dreams o'mornings, and observes that they come true by contraries? Who, now that Sir Walter disclaims it, hath faith in the stars? Nobody.

It was not so sixty or seventy years ago. Then the nation was a believing nation, and the world was a believing world. Even Frederick and his philosophical court (I mean him of Prussia called the Great) held, if we may trust M. Thiebault's very amusing book "Mes Souvenirs," as comfortable a share of these minor articles of faith as their more orthodox neighbours. M. de Klest, for instance, and a whole band of young spendthrifts ruined themselves by alchemy, which they pursued with the assistance of an adept, with sacrifices to the devil and as many suffumigations as Dousterswivel; the Marquis d'Argens had the infirmity of not enduring to be one of thirteen at table; M. Laméthrie, a professed atheist, crossed himself like a good catholic whenever it thundered or was likely to thunder; the princess Amelia, as stanch a philosopher as the best of them, believed *tout de bon*, in fortune-telling and astrology; the queen Ulrica of Sweden, another of Frederick's sisters, lent herself to the miracles of Emmanuel Swedenborg;† and the great king himself is violently suspected of sharing the fortune-telling faith of his sister Amelia, and even of suffering the predictions with which she furnished him to influence the conduct of his warlike operations.

Now without pretending to compete with this right royal superstition, inasmuch as I neither regulate my actions by fortune-tellers, nor believe that dead men are in the habit of holding conversations with the living—except perhaps sometimes in books, I must yet plead guilty to a few old-fashioned irrationalities, half of theory, and half of practice. There is no analyzing a folly of this sort, it runs away when one attempts to clutch it like a drop of quicksilver; but it is easily defined by instances. I had rather not spill the salt for example, unless I can slily throw a pinch over my left shoulder; and I had rather not see the new moon through a window; and I have gone all day with a stocking the wrong side without, rather than forfeit the good fortune attributed to that lucky accident by turning my hose; and although not generally addicted to the consulting of small oracles, such as the Virgilian lots and cards and so forth, yet I can so far sympathize with the feeling as to understand why, during his exile in Siberia, poor Kotzebue (those Germans are pretty believers) used to play by himself every night at la grande patience, and go to bed hopeful or despairing according as he had won or lost at his solitary game. Not that I have any real faith in such nonsense either—be sure to remember that, courteous reader—nothing like a real genuine honest faith—only a sort of sneaking kindness for the old foolery—besides one likes to meet with it now and then as a rarity, to sympathize with or laugh at according to circumstances.

*Of course the flower that we now call larkspur. I have attributed this charming song (the bridal song from the Two Noble Kinsmen) to Fletcher;—but it may belong to a still greater poet, for certainly Shakspeare was art and part in that beautiful tragedy.

† Mes Souvenirs de vingt ans de séjour à Berlin. Tome II. pages 111, et 285. M. Thiebault, talking of Swedenborg, relates a curious story of a conversation which that visionary held, or pretended to hold with a certain dead Baron, whose wife being much pestered by a creditor whom she knew to be paid, commissioned Swedenborg to inquire of the defunct what he had done with the receipt. The deceased Baron replied that being engaged in reading Bayle at the moment the paper was delivered to him, he had placed it between the leaves of such a volume at such a page, and the receipt was found there accordingly. This story much resembles Wandering Willy's tale in Redgauntlet, and was perhaps the origin of that fine legend.

This is a pleasure that seldom falls in my way. We have the ill luck to live in a very polished neighbourhood near a large manufacturing town, not far from London, and with a great road running through the village. We have a Free School of our own; and a National School, and a Lancasterian School close at hand; a public house where they take in two newspapers, and a parish clerk who reads Cobbett. In a word, we are a civilized people, I grieve to say it, a generation of wiseacres. At present we have not credulity enough amongst us to maintain a gipsy fortune-teller. My observations of this sort are all retrospective;—nothing better than recollections, dating at least twenty years back, before the lightning of universal education (for really it did burst upon us like a storm) had astonished and illuminated the world.

The last true believer of my acquaintance was a young farmer called Peter Hodges, who having luckily had a father before him, was well to do in the world, and was at the particular period of which I speak, (somewhere about Candlemas-tide in the year nine,) paying suit and service to the fair Kate Butler, daughter of old Simon Butler the bricklayer of Aberleigh, and one of the prettiest girls in the parish.

Now Peter was of that order of suitors with whom fathers are generally better pleased than their daughters, especially when those fathers are, as was the case with our good mason, thrifty and cautious, and mindful of the main chance, and the daughters like Kate, thoughtless and open-hearted. He, Peter Hodges, was a tall lathy awkward figure, with a boyish—I had almost said a girlish—countenance, fair, pale and freckled, and an expression so remarkably vacant and simple, that nobody could see him without being tempted to ask Macbeth's uncivil question, "Where got'st thou that goose look?" His motion was weak and shambling; as if his long thin limbs were unable to support his long thin body. Even his straight light hair stuck up and stuck out and waved abroad with a flickering motion, like flax upon a distaff, adding tenfold to the helpless silliness of his aspect. Silly he looked, and silly he was; so silly that in conversation, as his fair mistress was wont to assert, the very magpie had the advantage of him, inasmuch as she, when a stranger said "How d'ye do, Mag?" would answer "What's that to you, sir!" whereas Peter when thus addressed only opened his mouth and stared, and said nothing.

No such accusation could be brought against Kate, a lively spirited girl, whose beauty owed half its reputation to the quickness of mind and the light and joyous temperament, which danced in her eyes, played in her smiles, and gave a singular charm to the mingled archness and innocence of her rustic merriment. Kate had plenty to say for herself at all times, and was in truth almost equally agreeable to look at or to listen to.

So unluckily thought Peter Hodges. Every evening through the winter, from Michaelmas to New-year's day, and from New-year's day to Candlemas, did that indefatigable suitor present himself at the mason's cottage, until Dame Butler, whose domestic economy had at first been a good deal discomposed by the honour of the young farmer's visits, began from mere habit to mind him no more than a joint stool, and till poor Kate grew so weary of the sight of him, that she used to lock herself into her own little room, and go to bed without her supper, purely to get out of his way.

Now this was an affront which our imperturbable suitor bore with exemplary patience; but for which the contumacious damsel received sundry serious reproofs from her good father, the little mason; who reminded her that not only did farmer Hodges take the trouble to walk two miles every night to look at her baby-face, but that it was not many persons who would like to pass the Nursery corner of a dark winter's night. "I never saw any thing there myself," continued master Butler, "but all the parish knows it's haunted, and my grandmother, rest her soul! got strangely scared there, in her younger days, by a ghost all in white, and of surprising stature. The farmer thought he saw it last night," added the man of mortar; "he came in quite flustrated like, with his hair right on end upon his head, and making as much noise with his breath as you are doing with those bellows,—as if coals did not burn out fast enough, without such wastefulness," added the angry father, passing with great rapidity from one subject of objurgation to another; "the fire's a good fire, and nobody but an extravagant hussy would think of blowing it after that fashion."

"Mother ordered me to heat the irons," replied the culprit meekly; "but did Farmer Hodges really see the ghost, father? Do you think it was the ghost? Did you see any signs of it?"

"Why no," responded the little mason: "I can't say that I did. I took my hat down from the nail, and set out to see, but just at our gate I met young Joe Appleton of the Mill—I wonder what he was doing about here so late," muttered the knight of the hod, again flying from his subject and casting a keen glance at his daughter, who blushed and fidgeted, and busied herself in laying down the irons before the fire, and at last spoke timidly.

"But the ghost, father? Had he seen the ghost?"

"He? no! He said, if there's any truth in the chap, that the only thing to be seen at the Nursery corner, when he came by, was Hester Hewitt's white cow looking over a

gate. What 's the silly baggage laughing at now?" added the provoked father still more testily. "If Farmer Hodges gets another such fright, I should not wonder at his flying the country altogether, or taking up with that bouncing gawky wench, Madge Jenkins — She 'd be glad enough to marry him.—There 's not a man in Aberleigh better to pass in the world; and he to slip through our fingers from a silly jade's perverseness! It 's enough to drive one beside oneself,"—and off walked the little mason, muttering as he went, "I can't think what business Joe Appleton had about my place last night; if I catch him there again, I 'll trounce him."

Kate watched her father out with eyes dancing, cheeks dimpling, and her whole countenance lighted up with merriment and pleasure. "So! he 's afraid of the Nursery corner!" thought the saucy damsel to herself; and then with a transition almost as rapid as those which rushed through the mind of the man of bricks, — "Poor Joe Appleton!" thought she, "he 's not of a sort to be trounced or frightened by ghost or mortal! To think of his coming into father's way, though! Well!" sighed the pretty maiden; "well!" and with that philosophical exclamation, and a shake of the head as comprehensive as Lord Burleigh's, she proceeded in her preparation for the ironing.

The Nursery corner was, to say truth, as suitable a spot for a ghost to abide in as heart could desire. It was an old three-cornered, straggling plantation of dark dismal Scotch firs; and was surrounded on the sides next the road by decayed park-paling, through the gaps in which were seen patches of wild underwood, and half-dead furze-bushes, intersecting the withered grass which grew at the foot of the trees. This irregular and melancholy collection of rugged and dingy evergreens occupied the corner where a narrow, winding gloomy lane, which led to the more populous part of the village, turned somewhat suddenly into a small wild common, on the skirts of which stood the mason's neat dwelling, a cottage of his own erection, with an ample garnishing of out-houses, and pigstyes, and a tolerable garden cribbed from the waste.

Every old woman had a legend upon the subject, of which there were as many different versions as there were speakers, and every child shrank from passing the haunted corner; but neither Kate nor her father or mother had ever seen the spectre, although such near neighbours to his ghostship. None of them had ever seen the apparition; and such is the force of habit, that, sooth to say, they thought little of the matter. Master Butler, indeed, occasionally mentioned the story with some respect; partly out of veneration to his deceased grandmother, of blessed memory, of whom the ghost might in some sort be accounted the personal, or rather the impersonal acquaintance; partly because the fear of the apparition served every now and then as an affectionate and plausible pretext to keep his womankind at home after sunset; though I cannot discover that his awe of the supernatural was ever allowed to interfere with his own hebdomadal visits to the Saturday night's club at the Rose.

The night following the adventure of the white cow, a small party were assembled in the tap-room of that respectable hostelry, enjoying the warmth and brightness of a clear wood fire, all the more for its contrast with the frosty air without, for the spring was backward, and the evening cold. It was not a club night, and after two or three labourers had had their pint, and departed, the company consisted of an old Chelsea Pensioner, a relique of the American war, and a man of importance in the village, being as battered and as good-humoured a veteran as ever smoked a pipe; of Jem the keeper; and Will the blacksmith; and lastly, of the jolly host and his comely wife.

The well-thumbed county paper had been honestly gone through by this select party; who had discussed past debates, and coming assizes, lists of births, deaths, and marriages; two murders, a battle, and a great chancery suit, with a good deal of local intelligence by way of interlude, — all seasoned by certain piquant remarks of the pensioner, a joker by profession, and a privileged man amongst high and low, who liked the old red coat, some-deal the worse for wear, the empty sleeve, the long venerable white locks, the weather-beaten check, and the expression, "civil but sly," of his bright blue eyes, and merry but withered countenance. A pause had ensued in their "country cracks," when Jem the keeper, a coxcomb in his way, pulled out his handsome watch and seals with the self-satisfied air that betokens a new acquisition, and starting as he proclaimed the hour, declared "that he could not stay another minute for that wild chap, Joe Appleton. He must be going home; and if the mad Miller called at the Rose, they must tell him that he had waited till he could wait no longer, and was gone. He could not tell what was come to Joe Appleton. He had not seen him he did not know when, till the morning before, and then he made the appointment which he had broken now. He could not imagine what was come to him!"

"Pray were you ever in love, Jem?" asked the veteran, laying his hand on the keeper's shoulder as he passed him.

"In love? Oh yes!—No!—I believe not —I can't tell," replied the keeper, repenting the frankness of his first avowal, and trying to retract his confession.

"Stick to your first answer, my boy," said the old soldier, "that 's the true one. You have been in love yourself, and therefore can

give a shrewd guess at what ails Joe Appleton. The poor lad 's in love too."

"Ay, with pretty Kate of the Nursery corner," quoth mine hostess.

"Her father says she 's to marry long Peter Hodges," replied mine host. "But in heaven's name what 's that?" added he, interrupting himself, and going towards the door, at which some one was knocking with a most prodigious din. "Who 's that beating at the good oak panels as if he would beat them out?" continued the astonished landlord, undoing the lock, and admitting the clamorous applicant, who staggered faintly towards the group at the fire-place.

"Why, Farmer Hodges! was it you that made this clatter? I thought you had been a quieter body," said the Pensioner: "What 's the matter, man? I did not think it had been in him to make so much noise. He looks quite scared," added the veteran.

And Peter, his hair on end, and his face whiter than his shirt, sank into a low wicker chair by the fire, and began rocking himself to and fro, as if he were nursing a baby.

"He looks for all the world as if he had seen a ghost," pursued the old man.

And Peter started and looked round him, as if he saw it then.

"Where was it, lad? At the Nursery corner?"

And Peter's teeth chattered at the sound.

"Ah, they are sad things, those ghosts," continued the veteran, as Peter, rejecting the ale offered to him by the host, and the brandy tendered by the hostess, sank back in his wicker chair, looking very likely to faint away. "They are sad things, those ghosts," said the old man in a sympathising tone. "Better not cross them! I had my own troubles in that way, when I was a youngster. Did you never hear me tell of it, Master Hodges?* If it had not been for that ghost which came across us when I was upon guard in America, I should have saved General Prescott from being taken, and have been made a corporal upon the spot. A corporal! by Jove I should have been a general myself by this time, if that confounded ghost story had not come over me and stopped my preferment. Ghosts are plaguy things any how, especially if you cross them."

"What! did you ever see a ghost in America? a real ghost?" said a voice from behind, and Joe Appleton, who had entered unperceived in the bustle, advanced towards the veteran; "a real, actual, bona fide ghost?"

"Why should not I as well as he!" replied our scarlet friend. Then looking at Joe more closely, "Ah! Ah! man! I see how it is now! you have been playing the ghost yonder yourself, for the sake of your pretty sweetheart;" added he in a whisper, regarding the miller's hat, jacket, and trousers, all white with the flour of the mill, and catching hold of a bundle which he held under his arm. "I see how it is! And I 'll take care of Kate's sheet—it is her's, I suppose?" Joe nodded. "And do you wipe the flour from your face, and go your way with Jem the keeper, for though yon body's well-nigh stupefied with the fright, it 's better to run no risk. And now they're getting him to drink the brandy, what sense he has will come back again. Did I see a ghost, boy?" pursued the old man, as he was letting Joe Appleton out of the house-door; "Did I see a ghost in America? Ay, just such an one as Master Hodges has seen to-night! Just such an one as thyself, my lad! Get along with ye, and leave me to frighten long Peter out of passing the Nursery corner; Kate 's too good and too pretty for him, if he were as rich again," continued the old man to himself, as he joined the luckless farmer (who sat still half unconscious by the fire-side) and applied himself seriously to the business of consolation and mystification, taking upon him to compound two tumblers of stiff toddy, and so ordering his discourse whilst discussing them, that Peter left the Rose more certain that he had seen a ghost than he was when he entered it, and declared that he would never pass the Nursery corner again for love or money.

In about a twelvemonth, young Joe Appleton of the mill married the mason's pretty daughter with the consent of all parties; and in spite of the ups and downs of life, which they have shared with their neighbours, neither of them has, I believe, ever found cause to repent their union. The good old Pensioner is dead; long Peter is gone away; and the world is grown so wise, that the very children laugh at the terrors of the Nursery corner; and it would be impossible for a village maiden to frighten away a disagreeable lover by a ghost story now—even if she had Mrs. Radcliffe's genius for the romantic and the horrible.

NOTE.—The following characteristic and national narrative contains the American version of the Ghost story in question. The remarkable facts attending the capture of General Prescott are certainly true, being attested not only by my friend the veteran, but corroborated by some near relations of that brave officer, who remember the story as current in the family. It appears to have been one of those daring exploits which succeeded by their own exceeding boldness, and are practicable only because they appear impossible. Certainly if the notion of a ghost had not come across the English sentinel, the American adventurers would have had the worst of the fray.

Narrative of the Surprise and Capture of Maj. Gen. Richard Prescott, of the British Army, together with his Aid-de-camp, Major Barrington, by a party of American soldiers, under Major Wm. Barton, July 9, 1777.

In the month of November, 1776, Major General Lee was surprised and taken prisoner by a detach-

*Vide note at the end of the story.

ment of British troops.—With a view to procure the exchange of that valuable officer, William Barton, then a Major in the Rhode-Island line, in the service of the continental Congress, and one of the most daring and patriotic soldiers of the revolution, projected the bold and adventurous expedition, which is the subject of the following narrative.

Some months elapsed, after the capture of General Lee, before an opportunity offered of effecting the object which Major Barton had in view. In the month following that of the capture of General Lee, the enemy took possession of the islands of Rhode-Island, Canonicut, and Prudence. Major Barton was then stationed at Tiverton; and for some months anxiously watched the motions of the enemy, with but feeble prospect of obtaining the opportunity he desired. At length, on the 20th June, 1777, a man of the name of Coffin, who made his escape from the British, was seized by some of the American troops, and carried to Major Barton's quarters. Major Barton availed himself of the opportunity to inquire respecting the disposition of the British forces. Coffin, on examination, stated that General Prescott had established his headquarters on the west side of Rhode-Island, and described minutely the situation of the house in which he resided, which he said was owned by a Mr. Pering. His account was a few days afterwards corroborated by a deserter from the ranks of the enemy.—Major Barton was now confirmed in his belief of the practicability of effecting his favourite object—but serious obstacles were first to be encountered and removed. —Neither his troops nor their commander had been long inured to service; and the intended enterprise was of a nature as novel as it was hazardous. Besides, Major Barton was aware that the undertaking, should it prove unsuccessful, would be pronounced rash and unadvised, and in its consequences, though his life should be preserved, would be followed by degradation and disgrace. Moreover, to involve in the consequences of an enterprise, devised and undertaken without previous consultation with his superiors in rank, the interest and perhaps the lives of a portion of his brave countrymen, was a subject that excited reflections calculated to damp the ardour and appal the courage of the bravest minds. Still, however, upon mature reflection, aided by a consciousness that his only motive was the interest of his country, he resolved to hazard his reputation and life in the attempt.

The regiment to which Major Barton was attached was commanded by Colonel Stanton, a respectable and wealthy farmer in Rhode-Island, who in the spirit of the times, had abandoned the culture of his farm, and the care of his family, and put at hazard his property and his life, in defence of his country. To this gentleman Major Barton communicated his plan, and solicited permission to carry it into execution. Colonel Stanton readily authorised him "to attack the enemy when and where he pleased." Several officers in the confidence of Major Barton were then selected from the regiment for the intended expedition, on whose abilities and bravery he could rely: these were Captain Samuel Philips, Lieutenant James Porter, Lieutenant Joshua Babcock, Ensign Andrew Stanton, and John Wilcox, (Capt.— Adams subsequently volunteered his services, and took an active part in the enterprise.) These gentlemen were informed by Major Barton that he had in contemplation an enterprise which would be attended with great personal hazard to himself and his associates; but which, if success attended it, would be productive of much advantage to the country. Its particular object, he stated, would be seasonably disclosed to them. It was at their option to accept or decline his invitation to share with him in the dangers, and, as he trusted, in the glory that would attend the undertaking. The personal bravery of Major Barton had been previously tested; and such was the esteem and confidence which he had acquired amongst the officers under his command, that without insisting upon a previous developement of his plans, his proposal was immediately accepted. —Major Barton experienced more difficulty in obtaining the necessary number of boats, as there were but two in the vicinity. But this difficulty, though it caused a few days' delay, was at length obviated, and five whale-boats were procured and equipped for service. Major Barton had purposely postponed procuring the necessary number of men until the last moment, from an apprehension that their earlier selection might excite suspicion, and defeat the object of their enterprise. Desirous that his little band might be composed entirely of volunteers, the whole regiment was now ordered upon parade. In a short but animated address, Major Barton informed the soldiers that he had projected an expedition against the enemy, which could be effected only by the heroism and bravery of those who should attend him; that he desired the voluntary assistance of about forty of their number, and directed those "who would hazard their lives in the enterprise to advance two paces in front." Without *one exception* or *a moment's hesitation* the *whole* regiment advanced.—Major Barton, after bestowing upon the troops the applause they merited, and stating that he required the aid of but a small portion of their number, commenced upon the right, and, passing along the lines, selected from the regiment to the number of thirty-six, those who united to bravery and discipline a competent knowledge of seamanship for the management of the boats. Having thus obtained an adequate number of officers and men, and every thing being ready, the party on the 4th of July, 1777, embarked from Tiverton for Bristol. While crossing Mount Hope Bay, there arose a severe storm of thunder and rain, which separated three boats from that of their commander. The boat containing Major Barton, and one other, arrived at Bristol soon after midnight. Major Barton proceeded to the quarters of the commanding officer, where he found a deserter who had just made his escape from the enemy at Rhode-Island. From this man he learned that there had been no alteration for the last few days in the position of the British. On the morning of the 5th, the remaining boats having arrived, Major Barton and his officers went to Hog Island, not far distant from Bristol, and within view of the British encampment and shipping. It was at this place that he disclosed to his officers the particular object of the enterprise, his reasons for attempting it, and the part each was to perform. Upon reconnoitring the position of the enemy, it was thought impracticable, without great hazard of capture, to proceed directly from Bristol to the head-quarters of the British general. It was determined, therefore, to make *Warwick Neck*, a place opposite to the British encampment, but at a greater distance than Bristol, the point from which they should depart immediately for Rhode-Island. The most inviolable secrecy was enjoined upon his officers by Major Barton, and the party returned to Bristol.

On the evening of the 6th, about nine o'clock the little squadron again sailed, and, crossing Naraganset Bay, landed on Warwick Neck. On the 7th, the wind changing to E. N. E. brought on a storm, and retarded their plan. On the 9th, the weather being pleasant, it was determined to embark for the Island. The boats were now numbered, and the place of every officer and soldier assigned. At nine o'clock in the evening Major Barton assembled his party around him, and in an address, in which were mingled the feelings of the soldier and the man, he disclosed to them the object of the enterprise. He did not attempt to conceal the danger and difficulties that would inevitably attend the undertaking: nor did he forget to remind them, that should their efforts be followed by success, they would be entitled to, and would receive, the grateful acknowledgments of their country.—"It is probable," said he, "that some of us may not survive the daring attempt; but I ask you to hazard no

dangers which will not be *shared* with you by your commander; and I pledge you my honour, that in every difficulty and danger I will take the lead." He received the immediate and unanimous assurance of the whole party, that they would follow, wherever their beloved commander should lead them. Major Barton then reminding them how much the success of the enterprise depended upon their strict attention to orders, directed that each individual should confine himself to his particular seat in the boat assigned him, and that not a syllable should be uttered by any one. He instructed them, as they regarded their character as patriots and soldiers, that in the hour of danger they should be firm, collected, and resolved fearlessly to encounter the dangers and difficulties that might assail them. He concluded by offering his fervent petition to the Great King of Armies, that he would smile upon their intended enterprise, and crown it with success. The whole party now proceeded to the shore. — Major Barton had reason to apprehend that he must be discovered in his passage from the main to Rhode-Island, by some of the ships of war that lay at a small distance from the shore. He therefore directed the commanding officer of the port at Warwick Neck, that if he heard the report of *three* distinct muskets, to send the boats to the north end of Prudence Island to his aid. The whole party now took possession of the boats in the manner directed. That which contained Major Barton was posted in front, with a pole about ten feet long in her stern, to the end of which was attached a handkerchief, in order that his boat might be distinguished from the others, that none might go before it. In this manner they proceeded between the islands of Prudence and Patience, in order that they might not be seen by the shipping of the enemy that lay off against Hope Island.—While passing the north end of Prudence Island, they heard from the sentinels on board the shipping of the enemy the cry of "all 's well." As they approached the shore of Rhode Island, a noise like the running of horses was heard, which threw a momentary consternation over the minds of the whole party; but in strict conformity to the orders issued, not a word was spoken by any one. A moment's reflection satisfied Major Barton of the utter impossibility that his designs could be known by the enemy, and *he pushed boldly for the shore.* Apprehensive that if discovered the enemy might attempt to cut off his retreat, Major Barton ordered one man to remain in each boat and be prepared for departure at a moment's warning. The remainder of the party landed without delay. The reflections of Major Barton at this interesting moment were of a nature the most painful. The lapse of a few hours would place him in a situation in the highest degree gratifying to his ambition, or overwhelm him in the ruin in which his rashness would involve him. In the solemn silence of the night, and on the shores of the enemy, he paused a moment to consider a plan which had been projected and matured amidst the bustle of a camp, and in a place of safety. The night was excessively dark; and a stranger to the country, his sole reliance upon a direct and expeditious movement to the head-quarters of the British General, so essential to success, rested upon the imperfect information he had acquired from deserters from the enemy! Should he surprise and secure General Prescott, he was aware of the difficulties that would attend his conveyance to the boat; the probability of an early and fatal discovery of his design by the troops on the island; and even should he succeed in reaching the boats, it was by no means improbable that the alarm might be seasonably given to the shipping, to prevent his retreat to the main. But regardless of circumstances, which even then would have afforded an apology for a hasty retreat, he resolved at all hazards to attempt the accomplishment of his design.

To the head-quarters of General Prescott, about a mile from the shore, the party, in five divisions, now proceeded in silence. There was a door on the south, the east, and west sides of the house in which he resided. The first division was ordered to advance upon the south door, the second on the west, and the third on the east, the fourth to guard the road, and the fifth to act on emergencies. In their march they passed the guard-house of the enemy, on their left, and on their right a house occupied by a company of cavalry, for the purpose of carrying with expedition the orders of the general to remote parts of the island. On arriving at the head-quarters of the enemy, as the gate of the front yard was opened they were challenged by the sentinel on guard. The party was at the distance of about twenty-five yards from the sentinel, but a row of trees partially concealed them from his view, and prevented him from determining their number. No reply was made to the challenge of the sentinel, and the party proceeded on in silence. The sentinel again demanded, "Who comes there?" "Friends," replied Barton. "Friends," said the sentinel, "advance and give the countersign."

Major Barton, affecting to be angry, said to the sentinel, who was now near him, "D— you, we have no countersign — have you seen any rascals to-night?" and before the sentinel could determine the character of those who approached him, Major Barton had seized his musket, told him he was a prisoner, and threatened in case of noise or resistance to put him to instant death. The poor fellow was so terrified, that upon being demanded if his general was in the house, he was, for some time, unable to give any answer. At length, in a faltering voice, he replied that he was. By this time each division having taken its station, the south door was burst open by the direction of Major Barton, and the division there stationed, with their commander at their head, rushed into the head-quarters of the general. At this critical moment, one of the British soldiers effected his escape and fled to the quarters of the main guard. This man had no article of clothing upon him but a shirt, and having given the alarm to the sentinel on duty, passed on to the quarters of the cavalry, which was more remote from the head-quarters of the general. The sentinel roused the main guard, who were instantly in arms and demanded the cause of the alarm. He stated the information which had been given him by the soldier, which appeared so incredible to the serjeant of the guard, that he insisted he had seen a ghost. The sentinel, to whom the account of his general's capture appeared quite as incredible as to his commanding officer, admitted that the messenger was clothed in white; and after submitting to the jokes of his companions as a punishment for his credulity, was ordered to resume his station, while the remainder of the guard retired to their quarters. It was fortunate for Major Barton and his brave followers, that the alarm given by the soldier was considered groundless. Had the main guard proceeded without delay to the relief of their commanding general, his rescue certainly, and probably the destruction of the party, would have been the consequence.

The first room Major Barton entered was occupied by Mr. Pering, who positively denied that General Prescott was in his house. He next entered the room of his son, who was equally obstinate with his father in denying that the General was there. Major Barton then proceeded to other apartments, but was still disappointed in the object of his search. Aware that longer delay might defeat the object of his enterprise, Major Barton resorted to stratagem to facilitate his search. Placing himself at the head of the stair-way, and declaring his resolution to secure the General dead or alive, he ordered his soldiers to set fire to the house. The soldiers were preparing to execute his orders, when a voice which Major Barton at once suspected to be the General's, demanded what 's the matter. Major Barton rushed to the apartment from whence the voice proceeded, and discovered an elderly man just rising from his bed, and clapping his

hands upon his shoulder, demanded of him if he was General Prescott. He answered, "Yes, sir." "You are my prisoner, then," said Major Barton. "I acknowledge that I am," said the General. In a moment General Prescott found himself half-dressed, in the arms of the soldiers, who hurried him from the house. In the mean time Major Barrington, the aid to General Prescott, discovering that the house was attacked by the *rebels*, as the enemy termed them, leaped the window of his bed-chamber, and was immediately secured a prisoner. General Prescott, supported by Major Barton and one of his officers, and attended by Major Barrington and the sentinel, proceeded, surrounded by the soldiery, to the shore. Upon seeing the five little boats, General Prescott, who knew the position of the British shipping, appeared much confused, and turning to Major Barton inquired if he commanded the party. On being informed that he did, he expressed a hope that no personal injury was intended him, and Major Barton assured the General of his protection while he remained under his control.

The General had travelled from head-quarters to the shore in his waistcoat, small-clothes, and slippers. A moment was now allowed him to complete his dress, while the party were taking possession of the boats. The General was placed in the boat with Major Barton, as they proceeded for the main.

They had not got far from the island, when the discharge of cannon, and three sky-rockets gave the signal for alarm. It was fortunate for the party that the enemy on board the shipping were ignorant of the cause of it, who might easily have cut off their retreat. The signal of alarm excited the apprehensions of Major Barton and his brave associates, and redoubled their exertions to reach the point of their destination before they could be discovered. They succeeded, and soon after day-break landed at Warwick Neck, near the point of their departure, after an absence of *six hours and a half*.

General Prescott turned towards the island, and observing the ships of war, remarked to Major Barton, "Sir, you have made a bold push to-night."—"We have been fortunate," replied the hero. An express was immediately sent forward to Major General Spencer, to Providence, communicating the success which had attended the enterprise. Not long afterwards, a coach arrived, which had been despatched by General Spencer to convey General Prescott and his aid-de-camp prisoners for Providence. They were accompanied by Major Barton, who related to General Spencer, on their arrival, the particulars of the enterprise, and received from that officer the most grateful acknowledgments for the signal services he had rendered his country.

MATTHEW SHORE.

Next in beauty to the view over the Loddon at Aberleigh, is that from Lanton Bridge up and down the clear and winding Kennet, and this present season (the latter end of April) is perhaps the time of year which displays to the greatest advantage that fine piece of pastoral scenery. And yet it is a species of beauty difficult to convey to the reader. There is little to describe but much to feel; the sweet and genial repose of the landscape harmonizes so completely with the noontide sunshine and the soft balmy air. The river, bright and glassy, glides in beautiful curves through a rich valley of meadow land, the view on one side of the bridge terminating at the distance of a couple of miles by the picturesque town of B. with its old towers and spires, whilst on the other the stream seems gradually to lose itself amongst the richly wooded and finely undulating grounds of Lanton Park.

But it is in the meadows themselves that the real charm is to be found: the fresh sprouting grass, bordered with hedge-rows just putting on their tenderest green, dotted with wild patches of willow trees, and clumps of noble elms, gay with the golden marsh marigold and the elegant fritillary;* alive with bees and butterflies, and the shining tribe of water insects; and musical with the notes of a countless variety of birds, who cease singing or whom we cease to listen to (it comes exactly to the same thing) the moment the nightingale begins her matchless song. Here and there too, farm-houses and cottages, half-hidden by cherry orchards just in their fullest bloom, come cranking into the meadows; and farther in the distance chimney tops with curling wreaths of blue smoke, or groups of poplar, never seen but near dwellings, give a fresh interest to the picture by the unequivocal signs of human habitation and sympathy.

In one of the nearest of these poplar clumps —not above half a mile off, if it were possible for any creature except a bird to pass the wide deep ditches which intersect these water meadows, but which, by thridding the narrow and intricate lanes that form the only practicable route, we contrive to make nearly six times as long; in that island of spiral poplars and gigantic fruit trees, with one corner of the roof just peeping amongst the blossomy cherry boughs, stands the comfortable abode of my good friend Matthew Shore, to whose ample farm a large portion of these rich meadows forms an appendage of no trifling value.

Matthew is of an old yeomanry family, who have a pedigree of their own, and are as proud of having been for many generations the hereditary tenants of the owners of Lanton Park, as they themselves may be of having been for more centuries than I choose to mention, the honoured possessors of that fair estate. Excellent landlords, and excellent tenants, both parties are, I believe, equally pleased with the connection, and would no more think of dissolving the union, which time and mutual service have cemented so closely, than of breaking through the ties of near relationship; although my friend Matthew, having no taste for agricultural pursuits, his genius for the cultivation of land having broken out in a different line, has devolved on his younger brother Andrew the entire management and superintendence of the farm.

* The country people call this beautiful plant the Turkey-egg flower, and indeed the chequered pendent blossoms do, both in their shape and in their mottled tinting, bear some resemblance to the dappled eggs of that stately bird.

Matthew and Andrew Shore are as unlike as two brothers well can be in all but their strong manly affection for each other, and go on together all the better for their dissimilarity of taste and character. Andrew is a bluff frank merry Benedict, blest in a comely bustling wife, and five rosy children; somewhat too loud and boisterous in his welcomings, which come upon one like a storm, but delightful in his old-fashioned hospitality and his hearty good-humour; for the rest, a good master, a steady friend, a jovial neighbour, and the best farmer and most sagacious dealer to be found in the country side. He must be a knowing hand who takes in Andrew Shore. He is a bold rider too, when the fox-hounds happen to come irresistibly near; and is famous for his breed of cocking spaniels, and for constantly winning the yeomanry cup at the B. coursing meeting. Such is our good neighbour Farmer Shore.

His wife is not a little like her husband; a laughing, bustling, good-humoured woman, famous for the rearing of turkeys and fattening of calves, ruling the servants and children within doors, with as absolute a discretion as that with which he sways the out-door sceptre, and complaining occasionally of the power she likes so well, and which, with an ingratitude not uncommon in such cases, she is pleased to call trouble. In spite of these complaints, however, she is one of the happiest women in the parish, being amongst the very few who are neither troubled by poverty or finery—the twin pests of the age and country. Her expenses are those of her grandmother's days; she has fourteen-shilling hyson, and double-refined sugar for any friend who may drop in to tea, and a handsome silk gown to wear to Church on Sundays. An annual jaunt to Ascot is all her dissipation, and a taxed cart her sole equipage. Well may Mrs. Shore be a happy woman.

The only spot about the place sacred from her authority, is that which I am come to visit,—the garden; my friend Matthew's territory, in which he spends all his days, and half his nights, and which, in spite of his strong fraternal affection, he certainly loves better than brother or sister, nephew or niece, friend or comrade; better in short than he loves any thing else under the sun.

Matthew is an old bachelor of fifty-five, or thereaway, with a quick eye, a ruddy cheek, a delightful benevolence of countenance, a soft voice and a gentle manner. He is just what he seems, the kindest, the most generous, and the best-natured creature under the sun, the universal friend and refuge of servants, children, paupers, and delinquents of all descriptions, who fly to him for assistance and protection in every emergency, and would certainly stun him with their clamorous importunity, if he were not already as deaf as a post.

Matthew is one of the very few deaf people worth talking to. He is what is becoming scarcer every day, a florist of the first order, and of the old school,—not exactly of Mr. Evelyn's time,* for in the gardening of that period, although greens were, flowers were not,—but of thirty or forty years back, the reign of pinks, tulips, auriculas, and ranunculuses, when the time and skill of the gardener were devoted to produce, in the highest imaginable perfection, a variety of two or three favoured tribes. The whole of this large garden, for the potatoes and cabbages have been forced to retreat to a nook in the orchard, dug up in their behoof;—the whole ample garden is laid out in long beds, like those in a nursery ground, filled with these precious flowers, of the rarest sorts and in the highest culture; and as I have arrived in the midst of the hyacinth, auricula, and anemone season, with the tulips just opening, I may consider myself in great luck to see what is called in gardening language, "so grand a show." It is worth something too, to see Matthew's delight, half compounded of vanity and kindness, as he shows them, mixed with courteous offers of seedlings and offsets, and biographical notices of the more curious flowers; "How the stock of this plant came from that noted florist, Tom Bonham, the B. taylor, commonly called tippling Tom, who once refused fifty guineas for three auriculas! and how this tulip was filched" (Matthew tells this in a particularly low and confidential tone) "from a worthy merchant of Rotterdam, by an honest skipper of his acquaintance, who abstracted the root, but left five pounds in the place of it, and afterwards made over the bargain for a couple of pounds more, just to pay him for the grievous bodily fear which he had undergone between the time of this adventure, for there was no telling how the Burgomaster might relish the bargain, and his embarkation in the good schooner, the Race-horse of Liverpool."

Perhaps the tulips, especially this pet root, are on the whole Matthew's favourites; but he is a great man at pink shows and melon feasts; and his carnations, particularly those of a sort called "the Mount Etna," which seldom comes to good in other hands, as regularly win the plate as Andrew's greyhounds. It is quite edifying to hear him run over the bead-roll of pink names, from Cleopatra to the Glory of New York. The last-mentioned flowers are precisely my object to-day; for I am come to beg some of his old plants, to the great endangerment of my character as a woman of taste, I having, sooth to say, no judgment in pinks, except preferring those which are full of bloom, in which quality these old roots, which he was about to fling

* See note at the end of the sketch for a most curious account of the gardens round London in 1691.

away, and which he is giving me with a civil reluctance to put any thing so worthless into my garden, greatly excel the young plants of which he is so proud.

Notwithstanding his love for his own names, some of which are fantastical enough, Matthew wages fierce war against the cramp appellations, whether of geraniums or of other plants, introduced latterly, and indeed against all new flowers of every sort whatsoever, comprehending them all under the general denomination of trash. He contrives to get the best and the rarest, notwithstanding, and to make them blow better than any body, and I would lay a wager—Ay, I am right! the rogue! the rogue! What is that in the window but the cactus speciosissimus, most splendid of flowers, with its large ruby cup and its ivory tassels? It is not in bloom yet, but it is showing strong and coming fast. And is not that fellow the scarlet potentilla? And that the last fuchsia? And is there such a plant in the county as that newest of all the new camelias? Ah the rogue! the rogue! He to abuse my geraniums, and call me new-fangled, with four plants in his windows that might challenge the horticultural! And when I laugh at him about it, he'll pretend not to hear, and follow the example of that other great deaf artist

"Who shifted his trumpet and only took snuff."

Ah the rogue! the rogue! To think that fickleness should be so engrafted in man's nature, that even Matthew Shore is not able to resist the contagion, but must fall a flirting with cactusses and camelias — let the pinks and tulips look to it! The rogue! the rogue!

If the fickleness of man were my first thought, the desire to see the camelia nearer was the second; and Mrs. Shore appearing in the porch with her clean white apron and her pleasant smile, I followed her through a large, lightsome, brick apartment, the common room of the family, where the ample hearth, the great chairs in the chimney-corner, defended from draughts by green stuff curtains, the massive oak tables, the tall japanned clock, and the huge dresser laden with pewter dishes as bright as silver, gave token of rustic comfort and opulence. Ornaments were not wanting. The dresser was also adorned with the remains of a long-preserved set of tea-china, of a light rambling pattern, consisting of five cups and seven saucers, a tea-pot, neatly mended, a pitcher-like cream jug, cracked down the middle, and a sugar bason wanting a handle; with sundry odd plates, delf, blue, and white, brown-edged, and green-edged, scalloped and plain; and last and choicest with a grand collection of mugs—always the favourite object of housewifely vanity in every rank of rural life, from Mrs. Shore of Lanton-Farm, down to her maid Debby. This collection was of a particularly ambitious nature. It filled a row and a half of the long dresser, graduated according to size, like books in a library, the gallons ranking as folios, the half-pints ranging as duodecimos. Their number made me involuntarily repeat to myself two lines from Anstey's inimitable Pleader's Guide, meant to ridicule the fictions of the law, but here turned into a literal truth:

"First count's for that with divers jugs,
To wit, twelve pots, twelve cups, twelve mugs;"

but these jugs were evidently not meant to be profaned by the "certain vulgar drink called toddy," or any other drink. Half a dozen plain white ones, rather out of condition, which stood on a side-table, were clearly the drudges, the working mugs of the family. The ornamental species, the drone mugs hung on nails by their handles, and were of every variety of shape, colour, and pattern. Some of the larger ones were adorned with portraits in medallion—Mr. Wilberforce, Lord Nelson, the Duke of Wellington, and Charles Fox. Some were gay with flowers not very like nature. Some had landscapes in red, and one a group of figures in yellow. Others again, and these were chiefly the blues, had patterns of all sorts of intricacy and involution without any visible meaning. Some had borders of many colours; and some, which looked too genteel for their company, had white cameos relieved on a brown ground. Those drinking vessels were full of the antique elegance and grace. I stood admiring them when Mrs. Shore called me into the parlour, where the plant I wished to see was placed.

The parlour — Oh, how incomparably inferior to the kitchen!—was a little low, square, dark box, into which we were shut by a door, painted black, dimly lighted by a casement window, quite filled by the superb camelia, and rendered even more gloomy by a dark paper of reds and greens, with an orange border. A piece of furniture called a beaufette, open and displaying a collection of glass-ware, almost equal to the pewter for age and brightness, to the mugs for variety, and to the china for joinery, a shining round mahogany table, and six hair-bottomed chairs, really seemed to crowd the little apartment; but it was impossible to look at any thing except the splendid plant, with its dark shining leaves, and the pure, yet majestic blossoms reposing on the deep verdure, as a pearly coronet on the glossy locks of some young beauty. Ah! no wonder that the pinks are a little out of favour, or that Matthew stands smiling there in utter oblivion of striped tulip or streaked carnation! such a plant as this would be an excuse for forgetting the whole vegetable creation, and my good friend Matthew (who always contrives to hear the civil things one says of his flowers, however low one may speak, and who is perfectly satisfied by my admiration on the present occasion) has just made me almost as happy as himself, by pro-

mising to rear me one of the same sort, after a method of his own discovering, which he assures me brings them to perfection twice as fast as the dawdling modes of the new school. Nothing like an old gardener after all! above all if he be as kind, as enthusiastic, and as clever, as Matthew Shore.

NOTE.—The exceedingly rude state of horticultural science in England at a time when the sister art of domestic Architecture was perhaps more flourishing than at any period of our history, cannot be better illustrated than by the following curious and authentic paper, read in 1794 to the Antiquarian Society, and subsequently printed, one can hardly call it published, in the twelfth volume of the "Archæologia," where it has lain most honourably buried amongst "Essays on the Venta Icenorum," and "Letters on the Pusey Horn," for these thirty years. (N. B. The copy of that venerable quarto in which I discovered it was still uncut.) I insert it here because I think my readers will be as much amused as I have been at the odd notions of gardening entertained by our ancestors, especially by the green-houses built in the shade, and the rabbit warren in the midst of the flower gardens. What would the Horticultural Society say to such doings?

"A short account of several gardens near London, with remarks on some particulars wherein they excel or are deficient, upon a view of them in December, 1691. Communicated to the Society by the Rev. Dr. Hamilton, Vice President, from an original MS. in his possession.

"1. Hampton Court Garden is a large plot, environed with an iron palisade round about next the Park, laid all in walks, grass-plots and borders. Next to the house, some flat and broad beds are set with narrow rows of dwarf box, in figures like lace patterns. In one of the lesser gardens is a large green-house divided into several rooms, and all of them with stoves under them, and fire to keep a perpetual heat. In these there are no orange, or lemon trees, or myrtles, or any greens, but such tender foreign ones as need continual warmth.

"2. Kensington gardens are not great nor abounding with fine plants. The orange, lemon, myrtles, and what other trees they had there in summer, were all removed to Mr. Loudon's and Mr. Wise's green-house at Brompton Park, a little mile from them. But the walks and grass laid very fine, and they were digging up a plot of four or five acres to enlarge their garden.

"3. The Queen Dowager's garden at Hammersmith has a good green-house, with a high erected front to the south whence the roof falls backward. The house is well stored with greens of common kinds; but the queen not being for curious plants or flowers, they want of the most curious sorts of greens, and in the garden there is little of value but wall trees; though the gardener there, Monsieur Hermon Van Guine, is a man of great skill and industry, having raised great numbers of orange and lemon trees by inoculation, with myrtles, Roman bayes, and other greens of pretty shapes, which he has to dispose of.

"4. Beddington garden, at present in the hands of the Duke of Norfolk, but belonging to the family of Carew, has in it the best orangery in England. The orange and lemon trees there grow in the ground, and have done so near one hundred years, as the gardener, an aged man, said he believed. There are a great number of them, the house wherein they are being above two hundred feet long; they are most of them thirteen feet high and very full of fruit, the gardener not having taken off so many flowers this last summer as usually others do. He said he gathered off them at least ten thousand oranges this last year. The heir of the family being but about five years of age, the trustees take care of the orangery, and this year they built a new house over them. There are some myrtles growing among them, but they look not well for want of trimming. The rest of the garden is all out of order, the orangery being the gardener's chief care; but it is capable of being made one of the best gardens in England, the soil being very agreeable, and a clear silver stream running through it.

"5. Chelsea Physic Garden has great variety of plants both in and out of greenhouses. Their perennial green hedges and rows of different coloured herbs are very pretty, and so are their banks set with shades of herbs in the Irish-stitch way, but many plants of the garden were not in so good order as might be expected, and as would have been answerable to other things in it. After I had been there I heard that Mr. Watts the keeper of it was blamed for his neglect, and that he would be removed.

"6. My Lord Ranelagh's garden being but lately made, the plants are but small, but the plats, borders, and walks, are curiously kept and elegantly designed, having the advantage of opening into Chelsea College walks. The kitchen garden there lies very fine, with walks and seats, one of which being large and covered was then under the hands of a curious painter. The house is very fine within, all the rooms being wainscoted with Norway oak, and all the chimneys adorned with carving, as in the council chamber in Chelsea College.

"7. Arlington Garden being now in the hands of my Lord of Devonshire, is a fair plat, with good walks both airy and shady. There are six of the greatest earthern pots that are any where else, being at least two feet over within the edge, but they stand abroad, and have nothing in them but the tree holy-oke, an indifferent plant which grows well enough in the ground. Their green-house is very well and their green-yard excels; but their greens were not so bright and clean as farther off in the country, as if they suffered something from the smutty air of the town.

"8. My Lord Fauconberg's Garden at Sutton Court has several pleasant walks and apartments in it; but the upper garden next the house is too irregular and the bowling-green too little to be commended. The green-house is very well made, but ill set. It is divided into three rooms, and very well furnished with good greens; but it is so placed that the sun shines not on the plants in winter when they most need its beams, the dwelling-house standing betwixt the sun and it. The maze or wilderness there, is very pretty, being set all with greens, with a cypress arbour in the middle supported with a well-wrought timber frame; of late it grows thin at the bottom by their letting the fir-trees grow without their reach unclipped. The enclosure, wired in for white pheasants and partridges, is a fine apartment, especially in summer when the bones of Italian bayes are set out, and the timber walk with vines on the side is very fine when the blew pots are on the pedestals on the top of it, and so is the first pond with the greens at the head of it.

"9. Sir William Temple being lately gone to live at his house in Farnham, his garden and green-house at West Sheen, where he has lived of late years, are not so well kept as they have been; many of his orange-trees and other greens being given to Sir John Temple his brother at East Sheen, and other gentlemen; but his greens that are remaining (being as good a stock as most green-houses have) are very fresh and thriving, the room they stand in suiting well with them, and being well contrived, if it be no defect in it that the floor is a foot at least within the ground, as is also the floor of the dwelling-house. He had attempted to have orange-trees to grow in the ground (as at Beddington), and for that purpose had enclosed a square of ten feet wide, with a low brick wall, and sheltered them with wood, but they would not do. His orange-trees, in summer, stand not in any particular square or enclosure, under some shelter, as most others do, but are disposed on pedestals of Portland

stone at equal distance, on a board over against a south wall, where are his best fruit and fairest walk.

"10. Sir Henry Capell's Garden at Kew, has as curious greens, and is as well kept as any about London. His two Lentiscus trees (for which he paid forty pounds to Versprit) are said to be the best in England, not only of their sort but of greens. He has four white striped hollies, about four feet above their cases, kept round and regular, which cost him five pounds a tree this last year, and six laurustinuses he has, with large round equal heads, which are very flowery, and make a fine show. His orange trees and other choice greens stand out in summer in two walks, about fourteen feet wide, enclosed with a timber frame about seven feet high, and set, with silver firs hedge-wise, which are as high as the frame, and this to secure them from wind and tempest, and sometimes from the scorching sun. His terrace-walk, bare in the middle, and grass on either side, with a hedge of rue on one side next a low wall, and a row of dwarf trees on the other, shows very fine, and so do from thence his yew-hedges with trees of the same, at equal distance, kept in pretty shapes with tonsure. His flowers and fruits are of the best, for the advantage of which two parallel walls, about fourteen feet high, were now raised and almost finished. If the ground were not a little irregular, it would excel in other points as well as in furniture.

"11. Sir Stephen Fox's Garden at Chiswick, being but of five years' standing, is brought to great perfection for the time. It excels for a fair gravel-walk betwixt two yew-hedges with rounds and spines of the same, all under smooth tonsure. At the far end of this garden, are two myrtle hedges that cross the garden; they are about three feet high, and covered in winter with painted board cases. The other gardens are full of flowers and salleting, and the walls well clad. The green-house is well built, well set, and well furnished.

"12. Sir Thomas Cook's Garden at Hackney is very large, and not so fine at present, because of his intending to be at three thousand pounds charge with it this next summer, as his gardener said. There are two green-houses in it, but the greens are not extraordinary, for one of the roofs being made a receptacle for water, overcharged with weight, fell down last year upon the greens, and made a great destruction among the trees and pots. In one part of it is a warren containing about two acres, very full of coneys, though there was but a couple put in a few years since. There is a pond or mote round about them, and on the outside of that a brick wall four feet high, both which I think will not keep them within their compass. There is a large fish-pond lying on the south to a brick wall, which is finely clad with philarea. Water brought from far in pipes furnishes his several ponds as they want it.

"13. Sir Josiah Childs's plantations of walnut and other trees, at Wanstead, are much more worth seeing than his gardens, which are but indifferent. Besides the great number of fruit trees, he has planted his enclosures with great regularity: he has vast numbers of elms, ashes, limes, &c., planted in rows on Epping Forest. Before his outgate, which is above twelve-score distance from his house, are two large fish-ponds on the forest in the way from his house, with trees on either side lying betwixt them; in the middle of either pond is an island betwixt twenty and thirty yards over, and in the middle of each a house, the one like the other. They are said to be well stocked with fish, and so they had need to be if they cost him five thousand pounds, as it is said they did; as also that his plantations cost twice as much.

"14. Sir Robert Clayton has great plantations at Marden in Surrey, in a soil not very benign to plants, but with great charge he forces nature to obey him. His gardens are big enough, but strangely irregular, his chief walk not being level, but rising in the middle and falling much more at one end than the other; neither is the wall carried by a line either on the top or sides, but runs like an ordinary park wall, built as the ground goes. He built a good green-house, but set it so that the hills in winter keep the sun from it, so that they place their greens in a house on higher ground, not built for that purpose. His dwelling-house stands very low, surrounded with great hills; and yet they have no water but what is forced from a deep well into a waterhouse, where they are furnished by pipes at pleasure.

"15. The Archbishop of Canterbury's Garden at Lambeth, has little in it but walks, the late Archbishop not delighting in one, but they are now making them better, and they have already a green-house, one of the finest and costliest about the town. It is of three rooms, the middle having a stove under it, the foresides of the rooms are almost all glass, the roof covered with lead, the whole part (to adorn the building) rising gavel-wise higher than the rest; but it is placed so near Lambeth Church that the sun shines most on it in winter after eleven o'clock; a fault owned by the gardener but not thought on by the contrivers. Most of the greens are oranges and lemons, which have very large ripe fruit on them.

"16. Dr. Uvedale, of Enfield, is a great lover of plants, and having an extraordinary art in managing them, is become master of the greatest and choicest collection of exotic greens that is, perhaps, any where in this land. His greens take up six or seven houses or roomsteads. His orange trees and largest myrtles fill up his biggest house, and another house is filled with myrtles of a less size, and these more nice and curious plants that need closer keeping are in warmer rooms, and some of them stoved when he thinks fit. His flowers are choice, his stock numerous, and his culture of them very methodical and curious; but to speak of the garden, in the whole it does not lie fine, to please the eye, his delight and care lying more in the ordering particular plants, than in the pleasing view and form of his garden.

"17. Dr. Tillotson's Garden near Enfield, is a pleasurable place for walks, and some good walls there are too; but the tall aspen trees, and the many ponds in the heart of it are not so agreeable. He has two houses for greens, but had few in them, all the best being removed to Lambeth. The house is moated about.

"18. Mr. Evelin has a pleasant villa at Deptford, a fine garden for walks and hedges (especially his holly, one which he writes of in his Sylva,) and a pretty little green-house with an indifferent stock in it. In his garden he has four large round Philaneas smooth-clipt, raised on a single stalk from the ground, a fashion now much used. Part of his garden is very woody and shaded for walking; but his garden, not being walled, has little of the best fruits.

"19. Mr. Watts's house and garden made near Enfield are new; but the garden, for the time, is very fine, and large and regularly laid out, with a fair fish-pond in the middle. He built a green-house this summer, with three rooms, (somewhat like the Archbishop of Canterbury's) the middle with a stove under it, and a sky-light above, and both of them of glass on the foreside, with shutters within, and the roof finely covered with Irish slate. But this fine house is under the same fault with three before, (numbers 8, 14, 15): they built it in summer and thought not of winter; the dwelling-house on the south side interposing betwixt the sun and it, now when its beams should refresh plants.

"20. Brompton Park Garden, belonging to Mr. Loudon and Mr. Wise, has a large long green-house, the front all glass and board, the north side brick. Here the king's greens, which were in summer at Kensington, are placed, but they take but little room in comparison of their own. Their garden is chiefly a nursery for all sorts of plants, of which they are very full.

"21. Mr Rayntan's Garden at Endfield, is observa-

ble for nothing but his green-house, which he has had for many years. His orange, lemon, and myrtle trees, are as full and furnished as any in cases. He has a myrtle cut in shape of a chain, that is at least six feet high from the case, but the lower part is thin of leaves. The rest of the garden is very ordinary, and on the outside of his garden he has a warren, which makes the ground about his seat lie rudely, and sometimes the coneys work under the wall into the garden.

"22. Mr. Richardson at East Barnet has a pretty garden with fine walks and good flowers; but the garden not being walled about, they have less summer fruit, yet are therefore the more industrious in managing the peach and apricot dwarf standards, which, they say, supply them plentifully with very good fruit. There is a good fish-pond in the middle of it, from which a broad gravel-walk leads to the highway, where a fair pair of broad gates, with a narrower on either side, open at the top to look through small bars, well wrought and well painted, are a great ornament to the garden. They have orange and lemon trees, but the wife and son being the managers of the garden (the husband being gouty and not minding it) they cannot prevail for a house for them other than a barn end.

"23. Captain Foster's Garden at Lambeth has many curiosities in it. His green-house is full of fresh and flourishing plants, and before it is the finest striped holly hedge that perhaps is in England. He has many myrtles, not the greatest but of the most fanciful shapes that are any where else. He has a frame walk of timber covered with vines, which with others running on most of his walls without prejudice to his lower trees, yield him a deal of wine. Of flowers he has a good choice, and his Virginia and other birds in a great variety, with his glass hive, add much to the pleasure of his garden.

"24. Monsieur Anthony Vesprit has a little garden of very choice things. His green-house has no great variety of plants, but what he has are of the best sort, and very well ordered. His oranges and lemons (fruit and tree) are extraordinary fair, and for lenticuses and Roman bayes he has choice above others.

"25. Ricketts at Hoxton, has a large ground, and abundantly stocked with all manner of flowers, fruit trees and other garden plants, with lime trees which are now much planted; and for a sale garden, he has a very good green-house and well filled with fresh greens, besides which he has another room filled with greens in pots. He has a greater stock of Assyrian thyme than any body else, for besides many pots of it, he has beds abroad with plenty of roots which they cover with mats and straw in winter. He sells his things with the dearest, and not taking due care to have his plants prove well, he is supposed to have lost much custom.

"26. Pearson has not near so large a ground as Ricketts (on whom he almost joins,) and therefore has not so many trees, but of flowers he has great choice, and of anemones he avers that he has the best about London, and sells them only to gentlemen. He has no green-house, yet has abundance of myrtle and striped philaneas, with oranges and other greens, which he keeps safe enough under sheds, sunk a foot within ground, and covered with straw. He has abundance of cypresses, which at three feet high, he sells for fourpence a piece to those who take any number. He is moderate in his prices, and accounted very honest in his dealings, which gets him much chapmanry.

"27. Darby at Hoxton has but a little garden, but is master of several curious greens, that other sale gardeners want, and which he saves from cold and winter weather, in green-houses of his own making. His fritalaria crassa (a green) had a flower on it, of the breadth of a half-crown, like an embroidered star of several colours; I saw not the like any where, no, not at Dr. Uvedale's, though he has the same plant. He raises many striped hollies by inoculation, though Captain Foster grafts them as we do apple trees. He is very curious in propagating greens, but is dear with them. He has a folio paper book in which he has pasted the leaves and flowers of almost all manner of plants, which make a pretty show, and are more instructive than any cuts in herbals.

"28. Clements at Mile-End has no bigger a garden than Darby, but has more greens, yet not of such curious sorts. He keeps them in a green-house made with a light charge. He has vines in many places, round old trees, which they wind about. He made wine this year of his white muscadine and white frontiniac, better I thought than any French white wine. He keeps a shop of seeds, and plants in pots next the street.

Jan. 26, 1691. J. GIBSON."

Archæologia, vol. xii, page 181.

END OF OUR VILLAGE.

BELFORD REGIS:

SKETCHES OF A COUNTRY TOWN.

PREFACE.

In an Article on the last Volume of "Our Village," the courteous critic recommended, since I had taken leave of rural life, that I should engage lodgings in the next country town, and commence a series of sketches of the inhabitants; a class of the community which, whilst it forms so large a portion of our population, occupies so small a space in our literature, and amongst whom, more perhaps than amongst any other order of English society, may be traced the peculiarities, the prejudices, and the excellences of the national character.

"Upon this hint I *wrote*;" and the present work would have been called simply "Our Market Town," had not an ingenious contemporary, by forestalling my intended title, compelled me to give to "*my* airy nothings, a local habitation and a name."* It would not quite do to have two "Simon Pures" in the field, each asserting his identity and jostling for precedence; although I am so far from accusing Mr. Peregrine Reedpen (as the Frenchman did the ancients) of having stolen my best thoughts, that I am firmly of opinion, that were twenty writers to sit down at once to compose a book upon this theme, there would not be the slightest danger of their interfering with each other. Every separate work would bear the stamp of the author's mind, of his peculiar train of thought, and habits of observation. The subject is as inexhaustible as nature herself.

One favour, the necessity of which has been pressed upon me by painful experience, I have to entreat most earnestly at the hands of my readers,—a favour the very reverse of that which story-tellers by profession are wont to implore! It is that they will do me the justice *not* to believe one word of these sketches from beginning to end. General truth of delineation I hope there is; but of individual portrait-painting, I most seriously assert that none has been intended, and none, I firmly trust, can be found. From this declaration I except, of course, the notes which consist professedly of illustrative anecdotes, and the paper on the Greek plays, which contains a feeble attempt to perpetuate one of the happiest recollections of my youth. Belford itself too, may, perhaps, be identified: for I do not deny having occasionally stolen some touches of local scenery from the beautiful town that comes so frequently before my eyes. But the inhabitants of Belford, the Stephen Lanes, the Peter Jenkinses and the King Harwoods, exist only in these pages; and if there should be any persons who, after this protest, should obstinately persist in mistaking for fact what the author declares to be fiction, I can only compare them to the sagacious gentleman mentioned in "*The Spectator*," who, upon reading "The Whole Duty of Man," wrote the names of different people in the village where he lived, at the side of every sin mentioned by the author, and with half-a-dozen strokes of his pen, turned the whole of that devout and pious treatise into a libel.

Be more merciful to these slight sketches, gentle reader, and farewell!

Three Mile Cross, Feb. 25, 1835.

* "Our Town; or, Rough Sketches of Character, Manners, &c. By Peregrine Reedpen." 2 vols. London, 1834.

BELFORD REGIS.

THE TOWN.

About three miles to the north of our village, (if my readers may be supposed to have heard of such a place,) stands the good town of Belford Regis. The approach to it, straight as a dart, runs along a wide and populous turnpike-road, (for, as yet, rail-ways are not,) all alive with carts and coaches, wagons and phaetons, horse people and foot people, sweeping rapidly or creeping lazily up and down the gentle undulations with which the

surface of the country is varied; and the borders, checkered by patches of common, rich with hedge-row timber, and sprinkled with cottages, and, I grieve to say, with that cottage pest, the beer-houses,—and here and there enlivened by dwellings of more pretension and gentility—become more thickly inhabited as we draw nearer to the metropolis of the county; to say nothing of the three cottages all in a row, with two small houses detached, which a board affixed to one of them informs the passers-by is "Two-mile Cross;" or of those opposite neighbours, the wheelwrights and blacksmiths, about half a mile farther; or the little farm close to the pound; or the series of buildings called the Long Row, terminating at the end next the road with an old-fashioned and most picturesque public-house, with pointed roofs, and benches at the door, and round the large elm before it,—benches which are generally filled by thirsty wayfarers and wagoners, watering their horses, and partaking a more generous liquor themselves.

Leaving these objects undescribed, no sooner do we get within a mile of the town, than our approach is indicated by successive market-gardens on either side, crowned, as we ascend the long hill on which the turnpike-gate stands, by an extensive nursery-ground, gay with long beds of flowers, with trellised walks covered with creepers, with whole acres of flowering shrubs, and ranges of greenhouses, the glass glittering in the southern sun. Then the turnpike-gate, with its civil keeper—then another public-house—then the clear bright pond on the top of the hill, and then the rows of small tenements, with here and there a more ambitious single cottage standing in its own pretty garden, which forms the usual gradation from the country to the town.

About this point, where one road, skirting the great pond and edged by small houses, diverges from the great southern entrance, and where two streets meeting or parting lead by separate ways down the steep hill to the centre of the town, stands a handsome mansion, surrounded by orchards and pleasure-grounds; across which is perhaps to be seen the very best view of Belford, with its long ranges of modern buildings in the outskirts, mingled with picturesque old streets; the venerable towers of St. Stephen's and St. Nicholas'; the light and tapering spire of St. John's; the huge monastic ruins of the abbey; the massive walls of the county jail; the great river winding along like a thread of silver; trees and gardens mingling amongst all; and the whole landscape enriched and lightened by the dropping elms of the foreground, adding an illusive beauty to the picture, by breaking the too formal outline, and veiling just exactly those parts which most require concealment.

Nobody can look at Belford from this point, without feeling that it is a very English and very charming scene: and the impression does not diminish on farther acquaintance. We see at once the history of the place, that it is an ancient borough town, which has recently been extended to nearly double its former size; so that it unites, in no common degree, the old romantic irregular structures in which our ancestors delighted, with the handsome and uniform buildings which are the fashion now-a-days. I suppose that people are right in their taste, and that the modern houses are pleasantest to live in; but, beyond all question, those antique streets are the prettiest to look at. The occasional blending, too, is good. Witness the striking piece of street scenery, which was once accidentally forced upon my attention as I took shelter from a shower of rain in a shop, about ten doors up the right-hand side of Friar-street: the old vicarage-house of St. Nicholas', embowered in evergreens; the lofty town-hall, and the handsome modern house of my friend Mr. Beauchamp; the fine church-tower of St. Nicholas'; the picturesque piazza underneath; the jutting corner of Friar-street; the old irregular shops in the market-place, and the trees of the Forbury just peeping between, with all their varieties of light and shadow! It is a scene fit for that matchless painter of towns, Mr. Jones. I went to the door to see if the shower were over, was caught by its beauty, and stood looking at it in the sunshine long after the rain had ceased.

Then, again, for a piece of antiquity what can be more picturesque than the high, solitary bay-window in that old house in Mill-lane, garlanded with grapes, and hanging over the water, as if to admire its own beauty in that clear mirror? The projecting window is a picture in itself.

Or, for a modern scene, what can surpass the High Bridge, on a sunshiny-day? The bright river, crowded with barges and small craft; the streets, and wharves, and quays, all alive with the busy and stirring population of the country and the town;—a combination of light and motion. In looking at a good view of the High Bridge at noon, you should seem to hear the bustle. I have never seen a more cheerful subject.

Cheerfulness is, perhaps, the word that best describes the impression conveyed by the more frequented streets of Belford. It is not a manufacturing town, and its trade is solely that dependent on its own considerable population, and the demands of a thickly-inhabited neighbourhood; so that, except in the very centre of that trade, the streets where the principal shops are congregated, or on certain public occasions, such as elections, fairs, and markets, the stir hardly amounts to bustle. Neither is it a professed place of gaiety, like Cheltenham or Brighton; where London peo-

ple go to find or make a smaller London out of town. It is neither more or less than an honest English borough, fifty good miles from "the deep, deep sea," and happily free from the slightest suspicion of any Spa, chalybeate, or saline. We have, it is true, "the Kennet swift, for silver eels renowned," passing through the walls, and the mighty Thames for a near neighbour — water in plenty, but, luckily, all fresh! They who sympathise in my dislike of the vulgar finery, the dull dissipation of a watering-place, will feel all the felicity of this exemption.

Clean, airy, orderly, and affluent; well-paved, well-lighted, well-watched; abounding in wide and spacious streets, filled with excellent shops and handsome houses; such is the outward appearance, the bodily form of our market-town. For the vital spirit, the life-blood that glows and circulates through the dead mass of mortar and masonry, — in other words, for the inhabitants,—I must refer my courteous reader to the following pages. If they do not appear to at least equal advantage, it will be the fault of the chronicler, and not of the subject; and one cause, one singular cause, which may make the chronicler somewhat deficient, as a painter of modern manners, may be traced to the fact of her having known the place, not too well, but too long.

It is now about forty years ago, since I, a damsel scarcely so high as the table on which I am writing, and somewhere about four years old, first became an inhabitant of Belford; and, really, I remember a great deal not worth remembering concerning the place, especially our own garden, and a certain dell on the Bristol road, to which I used to resort for primroses. Then we went away; and my next recollections date some ten years afterwards, when my father again resided in the outskirts of the town, during the time that he was building in the neighbourhood, and I used to pass my holidays there, and loved the place as a school-girl does love her home. And, although we have kept up a visiting acquaintance, Belford and I, ever since, and I have watched its improvements of every kind with sincere interest and pleasure,—especially that most striking, and yet most gradual, change which has taken place amongst the great tradesmen, now so universally intelligent and cultivated,—yet these recollections of thirty years back, my personal experience of the far narrower and more limited society of the gentry of the place—the old ladies and their tea visits, the gentlemen and their whist club, and the merry Christmas parties, with their round games and their social suppers, their mirth and their jests;—recollections such as these, with the dear familiar faces and the pleasant associations of my girlish days, will prevail, do what I can, over the riper but less vivid impressions of a maturer age, and the more refined, but less picturesque state of manners of the present race of inhabitants.

So far it seemed necessary to premise, lest these general sketches of country-town society (for of individual portraiture I again assert my innocence) should exhibit Belford as a quarter of a century behind in the grand march of civilization: and I hereby certify, that whatever want of modern elegance, or of modish luxury, may be observed in these delineations, is to be ascribed, not to any such deficiency in the genteel circles of that "famous town," but to the peculiar tastes and old-fashioned predilections of the writer.

STEPHEN LANE, THE BUTCHER.

The greatest man in these parts, (I use the word in the sense of Louis-le-Gros, not Louis-le-Grand,) the greatest man hereabout, by, at least, a stone, is our worthy neighbour, Stephen Lane, the grazier, ex-butcher of Belford. Nothing so big hath been seen since Lambert the jailer, or the Durham ox.

When he walks, he overfills the pavement, and is more difficult to pass than a link of full-dressed misses, or a chain of becloaked dandies. Indeed, a malicious attorney, in drawing up a paving bill for the ancient borough of Belford Regis, once inserted a clause confining Mr. Lane to the middle of the road, together with wagons, vans, stage-coaches, and other heavy articles. Chairs crack under him, — couches rock, — bolsters groan, — and floors tremble. He hath been stuck in a staircase and jammed in a doorway, and has only escaped being ejected from an omnibus by its being morally and physically impossible that he should get in. His passing the window has something such an effect as an eclipse, or as turning outward the opaque side of that ingenious engine of mischief, a dark lantern. He puts out the light, like Othello. A small wit of our town, by calling, a supervisor, who dabbles in riddles, and cuts no inconsiderable figure in the poet's corner of a country newspaper, once perpetrated a conundrum on his person, which, as relating to so eminent and well-known an individual, (for almost every reader of the "H——shire Herald" hath, at some time or other, been a customer of our butcher,) had the honour of puzzling more people at the Sunday morning breakfast-table, and of engaging more general attention than had ever before happened to that respectable journal. A very horrible murder, (and there was that week one of the first water,) two shipwrecks, an *élèvement*, and an execution were all passed over as trifles, compared with the interest excited by this literary squib and cracker. A trifling quirk it was to keep Mr. Stacy, the surveyor, a rival bard, fuming over his coffee

until the said coffee grew cold; or to hold Miss Anna Maria Watkins, the mantuamaker, in pleasant though painful efforts at divination until the bell rang for church, and she had hardly time to undo her curl-papers and arrange her ringlets; a flimsy quirk of a surety, an inconsiderable quiddity! Yet, since the courteous readers of the "H——shire Herald" were amused with pondering over it, so, perchance, may be the no less courteous and far more courtly readers of these slight sketches. I insert it, therefore, for their edification, together with the answer, which was not published in the "Herald" until the H——shire public had remained an entire week in suspense:—"*Query*—Why is Mr. Stephen Lane like Rembrandt?" "*Answer*—Because he is famous for the breadth of his shadow."

The length of his shadow, although by no means in proportion to the width,—for that would have recalled the days when giants walked the land, and Jack, the famous Jack, who borrowed his surname from his occupation, slew them,—was yet of pretty fair dimensions. He stood six feet two inches without his shoes, and would have been accounted an exceedingly tall man, if his intolerable fatness had not swallowed up all minor distinctions. That magnificent *beau ideal* of a human mountain, "the fat woman of Brentford," for whom Sir John Falstaff passed not only undetected, but unsuspected, never crossed my mind's eye but as the feminine of Mr. Stephen Lane. Tailors, although he was a liberal and punctual paymaster, dreaded his custom. They could not, charge how they might, contrive to extract any profit from his "huge rotundity." It was not only the quantity of material that he took, and yet that cloth universally called broad was not broad enough for him,—it was not only the stuff, but the work—the sewing, stitching, plaiting, and button-holing without end. The very shears grew weary of their labours. Two fashionable suits might have been constructed in the time, and from the materials consumed in the fabrication of one for Mr. Stephen Lane. Two, did I say? Ay, three or four, with a sufficient allowance of cabbage,—a perquisite never to be extracted from his coats or waistcoats,—no, not enough to cover a pen-wiper. Let the cutter cut his cloth ever so largely, it was always found to be too little. All their measures put together would not go round him; and as to guessing at his proportions by the eye, a tailor might as well attempt to calculate the dimensions of a seventy-four gun ship,—as soon try to fit a three-decker. Gloves and stockings were made for his especial use. Extras and double extras failed utterly in his case, as the dapper shop-man espied at the first glance of his huge paw, a fist which might have felled an ox, and somewhat resembled the dead ox-flesh, commonly called beef, in texture and colour.

To say the truth, his face was pretty much of the same complexion—and yet it was no uncomely visage either; on the contrary, it was a bold, bluff, massive, English countenance, such as Holbein would have liked to paint, in which great manliness and determination were blended with much good-humour, and a little humour of another kind; so that even when the features were in seeming repose, you could foresee how the face would look when a broad smile, and a sly wink, and a knowing nod, and a demure smoothing down of his straight shining hair on his broad forehead gave his wonted cast of drollery to the blunt but merry tradesman, to whom might have been fitly applied the Chinese compliment, "Prosperity is painted on your countenance."

Stephen Lane, however, had not always been so prosperous, or so famous for the breadth of his shadow. Originally a foundling in the streets of Belford, he owed his very name, like the "Richard Monday," of one of Crabbe's finest delineations, to the accident of his having been picked up, when apparently about a week old, in a by-lane, close to St. Stephen's churchyard, and baptized by order of the vestry after the scene of his discovery. Like the hero of the poet, he also was sent to the parish work-house; but, as unlike to Richard Monday, in character as in destiny, he won, by a real or fancied resemblance to a baby whom she had recently lost, the affection of the matron, and was by her care shielded not only from the physical dangers of infancy, in such an abode, but from the moral perils of childhood.

Kindly yet roughly reared, Stephen Lane was even as a boy eminent for strength and hardihood, and invincible good-humour. At ten years old, he had fought with and vanquished every lad under fifteen, not only in the work-house proper, but in the immediate purlieus of that respectable domicile; and would have got into a hundred scrapes, had he not been shielded, in the first place, by the active protection of his original patroness, the wife of the superintendent and master of the establishment, whose pet he continued to be; and, in the second, by his own bold and decided, yet kindly and affectionate temper. Never had a boy of ten years old more friends than the poor foundling of St. Stephen's work-house. There was hardly an inmate of that miscellaneous dwelling, who had not profited, at some time or other, by the good-humoured lad's delightful alertness in obliging, his ready services, his gaiety, his intelligence, and his resource. From mending Master Hunt's crutch, down to rocking the cradle of Dame Green's baby—from fetching the water for the general wash, a labour which might have tried

the strength of Hercules, down to leading out for his daily walk the half-blind, half-idiot, half-crazy David Hood, a task which would have worn out the patience of Job, nothing came amiss to him. All was performed with the same cheerful good-will; and the warm-hearted gratitude with which he received kindness was even more attaching than his readiness to perform good offices to others. I question if ever there were a happier childhood than that of the deserted parish-boy. Set aside the pugnaciousness which he possessed in common with other brave and generous animals, and which his protectress, the matron of the house, who had enjoyed in her youth the advantage of perusing some of those novels—now, alas! no more—where the heroes, originally foundlings, turn out to be lords and dukes in the last volume, used to quote, in confirmation of her favourite theory, that he too would be found to be nobly born, as proofs of his innate high blood;—set aside the foes made by his propensity to single combat, which could hardly fail to exasperate the defeated champions, and Stephen had not an enemy in the world.

At ten years of age, however, the love of independence, and the desire to try his fortunes in the world, began to stir in the spirited lad; and his kind friend and confidant, the master's wife, readily promised her assistance to set him forth in search of adventures, though she was not a little scandalized to find his first step in life likely to lead him into a butcher's shop; he having formed an acquaintance with a journeyman slayer of cattle in the neighbourhood, who had interceded with his master to take him on trial as an errand-boy, with an understanding that, if he showed industry and steadiness, and liked the craft, he might, on easy terms, be accepted as an apprentice. This prospect, which Stephen justly thought magnificent, shocked the lady of the workhouse, who had set her heart on choosing a different scene of slaughter—killing men, not oxen—going forth a soldier, turning the fate of a battle, marrying some king's daughter, or emperor's niece, and returning in triumph to his native town, a generalissimo, at the very least.

Her husband, however, and the parish-overseers were of a different opinion. They were much pleased with the proposal, and were (for overseers) really liberal in their manner of meeting it. So that a very few days saw Stephen in blue sleeves and a blue apron—the dress which he still loves best—parading through the streets of Belford, with a tray of meat upon his head, and a huge mastiff called Boxer—whose warlike name matched his warlike nature—following at his heels, as if part and parcel of himself. A proud boy was Stephen on that first day of his promotion; and a still prouder, when, perched on a pony, long the object of his open admiration and his secret ambition, he carried out the orders to his country customers. His very basket danced for joy.*

Years wore away, and found the errand-boy transmuted into the apprentice, and the apprentice ripened into the journeyman, with no diminution of industry, intelligence, steadiness, and good-humour. As a young man of two or three and twenty, he was so remarkable for feats of strength and activity, for which his tall and athletic person, not, at that period, encumbered by flesh, particularly fitted him, as to be the champion of the town and neighbourhood; and large bets have been laid and won on his sparring, and wrestling, and lifting weights all but incredible. He has walked to London and back, (a distance of above sixty miles,) against time, leaping, in his way, all the turnpike-gates that he found shut, without even laying his hand upon the bars. He has driven a flock of sheep against a shepherd by profession, and has rowed against a bargeman; and all this without suffering these dangerous accomplishments to beguile him into the slightest deviation from his usual sobriety and good conduct. So that, when at six-and-

* Few things in a country life are more remarkable than the wild, triumphant, reckless speed with which a butcher's boy sweeps along the streets, and lanes, whether mounted, or in a rumbling, jolting cart, no accident ever happening, although it seems inevitable that the young gentleman must either kill, or be killed (perhaps both) every day of his life. How the urchins manage, Heaven knows!—but they do contrive to get horses on in a manner that professed jockeys would envy, and with an appearance of ease to the animal, and an evident enjoyment in the rider, which produce sympathy rather than indignation in the lookers on. It is seldom that an affair of plain, sober, serious business (and the bringing us our dinner does certainly belong to the most serious business of life,) is transacted with such overflowing delight—such gay, gallant, inexpressible good-humour.

The following anecdote (communicated by a friend) may serve to illustrate their peculiar dexterity in putting a steed on his mettle:—

A gentleman of fortune, residing in Berkshire, who prides himself very highly on the superiority of his horses, was greatly struck by the trotting of a roadster, belonging to a butcher in his neighbourhood. The owner, however, refused to part with the animal, till an offer of seventy guineas proved irresistible, and the gentleman mounted his prize in high glee. To his utter astonishment, however, the brute could not be prevailed upon to exceed an ordinary amble. Whip and spur were tried in vain. For weeks, he persevered in the hopeless attempt, and, at last, he went, in despair, to the butcher, rating him in good set terms for having practised an imposition. "Lord bless you, sir," said the knight of the cleaver; "he can trot as well as ever. Here, Tom," continued he, calling to his boy, "get on his back." The youngster was scarcely in the saddle, when off the pony shot, like an arrow. "How the deuce is this?" inquired the astonished purchaser. "Why, he will trot just as fast with you," returned the butcher, chuckling, "*only you must carry the basket!*"

I need hardly add, that the gentleman, not being able to comply with this condition, was forced to make the best bargain he could with the original proprietor of the steed—who, by the way, was not my good friend Stephen Lane.

twenty he became, first, head man to Mr. Jackson, the great butcher in the Butts; then married Mr. Jackson's only daughter; then, on his father-in-law's death, succeeded to the business and a very considerable property; and, finally, became one of the most substantial, respectable, and influential inhabitants of Belford, — every one felt that he most thoroughly deserved his good fortune: and, although his prosperity has continued to increase with his years, and those who envied have seldom had the comfort of being called on to condole with him on calamities of any kind, yet, such is the power of his straight-forward, fair dealing, and his enlarged liberality, that his political adversaries, on the occasion of a contested election, or some such trial of power, are driven back to the workhouse and St. Stephen's lane, to his obscure and ignoble origin, (for the noble parents whom his poor old friend used to prognosticate have never turned up,) to find materials for party malignity.

Prosperous, most prosperous, has Stephen Lane been through life; but by far the best part of his good fortune (setting pecuniary advantages quite out of the question) was his gaining the heart and hand of such a woman as Margaret Jackson. In her youth she was splendidly beautiful — of the luxuriant and gorgeous beauty in which Giorgione revelled; and now, in the autumn of her days, amplified, not like her husband, but so as to suit her matronly character, she seems to me almost as delightful to look upon as she could have been in her earliest spring. I do not know a prettier picture than to see her sitting at her own door, on a summer afternoon, surrounded by her children and her grand-children,—all of them handsome, gay, and cheerful, — with her knitting on her knee, and her sweet face beaming with benevolence and affection, smiling on all around, and seeming as if it were her sole desire to make every one about her as good and as happy as herself. One cause of the long endurance of her beauty is undoubtedly its delightful expression. The sunshine and harmony of mind depicted in her countenance would have made plain features pleasing; and there was an intelligence, an enlargement of intellect, in the bright eyes and the fair expanded forehead, which mingled well with the sweetness that dimpled round her lips. Butcher's wife and butcher's daughter though she were, yet was she a graceful and gracious woman, — one of nature's gentlewomen in look and in thought. All her words were candid — all her actions liberal — all her pleasures unselfish — though, in her great pleasure of giving, I am not quite sure that she was so — she took such extreme delight in it. All the poor of the parish and the town came to her, as a matter of course— *that* is always the case with the eminently charitable; but children also applied to her for their little indulgences, as if by instinct. All the boys in the street used to come to her to supply their several desires; to lend them knives and give them string for kites, or pencils for drawing, or balls for cricket, as the matter might be. Those huge pockets of hers were a perfect toy-shop, and so the urchins knew. And the little damsels, their sisters, came to her also for materials for dolls' dresses, or odd bits of riband for pincushions, or coloured silks to embroider their needle-cases, or any of the thousand-and-one knicknacks which young girls fancy they want. However out of the way the demand might seem, there was the article in Mrs. Lane's great pocket. She knew the taste of her clients, and was never unprovided. And in the same ample receptacle, mixed with knives and balls, and pencils for the boys, and dolls' dresses, and sometimes even a doll itself, for the girls, might be found sugar-plums, and cakes, and apples, and ginger-bread nuts, for the "toddling wee things," for whom even dolls have no charms. There was no limit to Mrs. Lane's bounty, or to the good-humoured alacrity with which she would interrupt a serious occupation to satisfy the claims of the small people. Oh, how they all loved Mrs. Lane!

Another and a very different class also loved the kind and generous inhabitant of the Butts —the class who, having seen better days, are usually averse to accepting obligations from those whom they have been accustomed to regard as their inferiors. With them, Mrs. Lane's delicacy was remarkable. Mrs. Lucas, the curate's widow, often found some unbespoken luxury, a sweetbread, or so forth, added to her slender order; and Mr. Hughes, the consumptive young artist, could never manage to get his bill. Our good friend the butcher had his full share in the benevolence of these acts, but the manner of them belonged wholly to his wife.

Her delicacy, however, did not, fortunately for herself and for her husband, extend to her domestic habits. She was well content to live in the coarse plenty in which her father lived, and in which Stephen revelled; and by this assimilation of taste, she not only ensured her own comfort, but preserved, unimpaired, her influence over his coarser but kindly and excellent disposition. It was, probably, to this influence that her children owed an education which, without raising them in the slightest degree above their station or their home, yet followed the spirit of the age, and added considerable cultivation, and plain but useful knowledge, to the strong manly sense of their father, and her own sweet and sunny temperament. They are just what the children of such parents ought to be. The daughters, happily married in their own rank of life; the sons, each in his different line, following the footsteps of their father and amassing large fortunes, not by paltry savings or daring speculations, but by well-grounded and judi-

cious calculation—by sound and liberal views—by sterling sense and downright honesty.

Universally as Mrs. Lane was beloved, Stephen had his enemies. He was a politician—a Reformer—a Radical, in those days in which reform was not so popular as it has been lately: he loved to descant on liberty, and economy, and retrenchment, and reform, and carried his theory into practice, in a way exceedingly inconvenient to the Tory member, whom he helped to oust; to the mayor and corporation, whom he watched as a cat watches a mouse, or as Mr. Hume watches the cabinet ministers; and to all gas companies, and paving companies, and water companies, and contractors of every sort, whom he attacks as monopolizers and peculators, and twenty more long words with bad meanings, and torments out of their lives;—for he is a terrible man in a public meeting, hath a loud, sonorous voice, excellent lungs, cares for nobody, and is quite entirely inaccessible to conviction, the finest of all qualities for your thorough-going partisan. All the Tories hated Mr. Lane.*

But the Tories latterly have formed but a small minority in Belford; and amongst the Whigs and Radicals, or, to gather the two parties into one word, the Reformers, he was decidedly popular—the leader of the opulent tradespeople both socially and politically. He it was—this denouncer of mayor's feasts and parish festivals—who, after the great contest, which his candidate gained by three, gave to the new member a dinner more magnificent, as he declared, than any he had ever seen or ever imagined—a dinner like the realization of an epicure's dream, or an embodying of some of the visions of the old dramatic poets, accompanied by wines so aristocratic, that they blushed to find themselves on a butcher's table. He was president of a smoking-club, and vice-president of half-a-dozen societies where utility and charity come in the shape of a good dinner; was a great man at a Smithfield cattle-show; an eminent looker-on at the bowling-green, which salutary exercise he patronised and promoted by sitting at an open window in a commodious smoking-room commanding the scene of action; and a capital performer of catches and glees.

He was musical, very—did I not say so when talking of his youthful accomplishments?—playing by ear "with fingers like toes" (as somebody said of Handel) both on the piano and the flute, and singing, in a fine bass voice, many of the old songs which are so eminently popular and national. His voice was loudest at church, giving body, as it were, to the voices of the rest of the congregation, and "God save the King" at the theatre would not have been worth hearing without Mr. Lane—he put his whole heart into it; for, with all his theoretical radicalism, the King—any of the three kings in whose reign he hath flourished, for he did not reserve his loyalty for our present popular monarch, but bestowed it in full amplitude on his predecessors, the two last of the Georges—the King hath not a more loyal subject. He is a great patron of the drama, especially the comic drama, and likes no place better than the stage-box at the Belford theatre, a niche meant for six, which exactly fits him. All-fours is his favourite game, and Joe Miller his favourite author.

His retirement from business and from Belford occasioned a general astonishment and consternation. It was perfectly understood that he could afford to retire from business as well as any tradesman who ever gave up a flourishing shop in that independent borough; but the busy-bodies, who take so unaccountable a pleasure in meddling with every body's concerns, had long ago decided that he never would do so; and that he should abandon the good town at the very moment when the progress of the Reform Bill had completed his political triumphs—when the few adversaries who remained to the cause, as he was wont emphatically to term it, had not a foot to stand upon—did appear the most wonderful wonder of wonders that had occurred since the days of Katterfelto. Stephen Lane without Belford!—Belford, especially in its reformed state, without Stephen Lane, appeared as incredible as the announcements of the bottle-conjurer. Stephen Lane to abandon the great shop in the Butts! What other place would ever hold him? And to quit the scene of his triumphs too! to fly from the very field of victory!—the thing seemed impossible!

It was, however, amongst the impossibilities that turn out true. Stephen Lane *did* leave the reformed borough, all the sooner because it *was* reformed, and his work was over—his occupation was gone. It is certain that, without perhaps exactly knowing his own feelings, our good butcher did feel the vacuum, the want of an exciting object, which often attends upon the fulfilment of a great hope. He also felt and understood better the entire cessation of opposition amongst his old enemies, the corporation party. "Dang it, they might ha' shown fight, these corporationers! I thought Ben Bailey had had more bottom!" was his exclamation, after a borough meeting which had passed off unanimously; and scandalized at the pacific disposition of his adversaries, our puissant grazier turned his

* All women hate elections, and politics, and party collision of all sorts; and so, especially at an election time, do I. But, after all, I believe we are wrong. The storm clears the air, and stirs the water, and keeps the lakes and pools from growing stagnant. Hatreds and enmities pass away, and people learn one of the great arts of life, one of the great secrets of happiness—to differ without bitterness, and to admit that two persons, both equally honest and independent, may conscientiously take directly opposite views of the same question. I am not sure that this was exactly Stephen Lane's notion; but I think the world is coming gradually to such a conclusion.

steps towards "fresh fields and pastures new."

He did not move very far. Just over the border-line, which divides the parish of St. Stephen, in the loyal and independent borough of Belford, from the adjoining hamlet of Sunham—that is to say, exactly half a mile from the great shop in the Butts, did Mr. Lane take up his abode, calling his suburban habitation, which was actually joined to the town by two rows of two-story houses, one of them fronted with poplars, and called Marvell Terrace, in compliment to the patriot of that name in Charles's days,—calling this *rus in urbe* of his "the country," after the fashion of the inhabitants of Kensington and Hackney, and the other suburban villages which surround London proper; as if people who live in the midst of brick houses could have a right to the same rustic title with those who live amongst green fields. Compared to the Butts, however, Mr. Lane's new residence was almost rural; and the country he called it accordingly.

Retaining, however, his old town predilections, his large, square, commodious, and very ugly red house, with very white mouldings and window-frames, (red, so to say, picked out with white,) and embellished by a bright green door and a resplendent brass knocker, was placed close to the road-side — as close as possible; and the road happening to be that which led from the town of Belford to the little place called London, he had the happiness of counting above sixty stage-coaches, which passed his door in the twenty-four hours, with vans, wagons, carts, and other vehicles in proportion; and of enjoying, not only from his commodious mansion, but also from the window of a smoking-room at the end of a long brick wall which parted his garden from the road, all the clatter, dust, and din, of these several equipages — the noise being duly enhanced by there being, just opposite his smoking-room window, a public house of great resort, where most of the coaches stopped to take up parcels and passengers, and where singing, drinking, and four-corners were going on all the day long.

One of his greatest pleasures in this retirement seems to be to bring all around him —wife, children, and grand-children—to the level of his own size, or that of his prize ox, — the expressions are nearly synonymous. The servant-lads have a chubby breadth of feature, like the stone heads with wings under them (*soi-disant* cherubim,) which one sees perched round old monuments; and the maids have a broad, Dutch look, full and florid, like the women in Teniers' pictures. The very animals seem bursting with over-fatness: the great horse who draws his substantial equipage, labours under the double weight of his master's flesh and his own; his cows look like stalled oxen; and the leash of his large red greyhounds, on whose prowess and pedigree he prides himself, and whom he boasts, and vaunts, and brags of, and offers to bet upon, in the very spirit of the inimitable dialogue between Page and Shallow in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," could no more run a course in their present condition than they could fly, — the hares would stand and laugh at them.

Mr. Lane is certainly a very happy person; although, when first he removed from the Butts, it was quite the fashion to bestow a great deal of pity on the poor rich man, self-condemned to idleness, — which pity was as much thrown away as pity for those who have the power to follow their own devices generally is. Our good neighbour is not the man to be idle. Besides going every day to the old shop, where his sons carry on the business, and he officiates *en amateur*, attending his old clubs, and pursuing his old diversions in Belford, he has his farm in Sunham to manage, (some five hundred acres of pasture and arable land, which he purchased with his new house,) and the whole parish to reform. He has already begun to institute inquiries into charity-schools and poor-rates, has an eye on the surveyor of highways, and a close watch on the overseer; he attends turnpike meetings, and keeps a sharp look-out upon the tolls; and goes peeping about the workhouse with an anxiety to detect peculation that would do honour even to a Radical member of the reformed House of Commons.

Moreover, he hath a competitor worthy of his powers, in the shape of the village orator, Mr. Jacob Jones, a little whipper-snapper of a gentleman farmer, with a shrill, cracked voice, and great activity of body, who, having had the advantage of studying some odds-and-ends of law, during a three years' residence in an attorney's office, has picked up therein a competent portion of technical jargon, together with a prodigious volubility of tongue, and a comfortable stock of impudence; and, under favour of these good gifts, hath led the village senate by the nose for the last dozen years. Now, Mr. Jacob Jones is, in his way, nearly as great a man as Mr. Lane; rides his bit of blood a fox-hunting with my Lord; dines once a year with Sir John; and advocates abuses through thick and thin—he does not well know why—almost as stoutly as our good knight of the cleaver does battle for reform. These two champions are to be pitted against each other at the next vestry-meeting, and much interest is excited as to the event of the contest. I, for my part, think that Mr. Lane will carry the day. He is, in every way, a man of more substance: and Jacob Jones will no more be able to "withstand the momentum of his republican fist," than a soldier of light infantry could stand the charge

of a heavy dragoon. Stephen, honest man, will certainly add to his other avocations that of overseer of Sunham. Much good may it do him!

WILLIAM AND HANNAH.

"Don't talk to me, William, of our having been asked in church. Don't imagine that I mind what people say about that. Let them attend to their own concerns, and leave me to manage mine. If this were our wedding morning, and I were within half an hour of being your wedded wife, I would part from you as readily as I throw away this rose-leaf, if I were to know for certain what I have heard to-day. Were you or were you not three times tipsy last week, at that most riotous and disorderly house, "The Eight Bells?"

This searching question was put by the young and blooming Hannah Rowe, a nursery-maid in the family of General Maynard, of Oakley Manor, to her accepted lover, William Curtis, a very fine young man, who followed his trade of a shoemaker in the good town of Belford. The courtship had, as the fair damsel's words implied, approached as nearly as well could be to the point matrimonial; Hannah having given her good mistress warning, and prepared her simple wardrobe; and William, on his part, having taken and furnished a room—for to a whole house neither of them aspired — near his master's shop: William, although a clever workman, and likely to do well, being as yet only a journeyman.

A finer couple it would be difficult to meet with anywhere, than William and his Hannah. He was tall, handsome, and intelligent, with a perpetual spring of good-humour, and a fund of that great gift of Heaven, high animal spirits, which being sustained by equal life of mind, (for otherwise it is not a good gift,) rendered him universally popular. She had a rich, sparkling animated beauty — a warmth of manner and of feeling, equally prepossessing. She loved William dearly, and William knew it. Perhaps he did not equally know that her quickness of temper was accompanied by a decision and firmness of character, which, on any really essential point, would not fail to put forth its strength. Such a point was this, as Hannah knew from woful experience: for her own father had been a frequenter of the alehouse—had ruined himself altogether, health, property, and character, by that degrading and ruinous propensity, and had finally died of sheer drunkenness, leaving her mother a broken-hearted woman, and herself, a child of eight years old, to struggle as best they might, through the wide world. Well did Hannah remember her dear mother, and that dear mother's sufferings;—how she would sit night after night awaiting the return of her brutal husband, bending silently and patiently over the needlework, by which she endeavoured to support herself and her child; and how, when he did return, when his reeling, unsteady step was heard on the pavement, or his loud knock at the door, or the horrid laugh and frightful oath of intoxication in the street, how the poor wife would start and tremble, and strive to mould her quivering lips into a smile, and struggle against her tears, as he called fiercely for comforts which she had not to give, and thundered forth imprecations on herself and her harmless child. Once she remembered — she could not have been above five years old at the time, but she remembered it as if it had happened yesterday — awaking suddenly from sleep on her wretched bed, and seeing, by the dim moonlight that came in through the broken windows, her father, in his drunken frenzy, standing over her, and threatening to strangle her, whilst her mother, frantic with fear, tore him away, and had her arm broken in the struggle. This scene, and scenes like this, passed through Hannah's mind, as she leant over the calm face of Mrs. Maynard's lovely infant, who lay sleeping on her lap, and repeated, in a low, calm voice, her former question to William—"Were you not three times tipsy last week?"

"Now, Hannah," replied William, evasively, "how can you be so cross and old-maidish? If I did get a little merry, what was it but a joyful parting from bachelor friends before beginning a steady married life? What do you women know of such things? What can you know? and what can a young fellow do with himself, when his work is over, if he is not to go to a public house? We have not work now for above half a day — that is to say, not more work in a week than I could finish in three days; and what, I should like to know, am I to do with the remainder? At the Eight Bells, say what you like of the place, there 's good liquor and good company, a good fire in winter, a newspaper to read, and the news of the town to talk over. Does not your master himself go to his club every night of his life when he is in London? And what — since you won't let me come above twice a week to see you — what would you have me to do with the long evenings when *my* work is over?"

Hannah was a little posed at this question. Luckily, however, a present sent to her mistress by an old servant who had married a gardener, consisting of a fine basket of strawberries, another of peas, and a beautiful nosegay of pinks and roses, caught her eye as they lay on the table before her.

"Why not take a little plot of ground, and work in that of evenings, and raise vegetables and flowers? Any thing rather than the public house!"

William laughed outright.

"Where am I to get this plot of ground? tell me that, Hannah! You know that at present I am lodging with my aunt in Silver-street, who has only a little bricked yard; and when we move to our room in Newton-row, why the outlet there will not be so large as that table. This is all nonsense, as you well know. I am no gardener, but a merry shoemaker; and such as I am you have chosen me, and you must take me."

"And you will not promise to give up the Eight Bells?" asked Hannah, imploringly.

"Promise—no—" hesitated William. "I dare say I should do as you like; but as to promising—it is *you* who have promised to take me 'for better for worse,'" added he, tenderly; "surely you do not mean to deceive me?"

"Oh, William!" said Hannah, "it is you who would deceive me and yourself. I know what the public house leads to; and suffer what I may, better suffer now and alone, than run the risk of *that* misery. Either promise to give up the Eight Bells, or, dearly as I love you, and far as things have gone, we must part," added she, firmly.

And as William, though petitioning, remonstrating, coaxing, storming, and imploring, would not give the required pledge, part they did; his last speech denouncing a vengeance which she could ill bear.

"You will repent this, Hannah! for you have been the ruin of me. You have broken my heart; and if you hear of me every night at the alehouse, endeavouring to drown care, remember that it is you, and you only, who have driven me there!" And so saying, he walked sturdily out of the house.

William went away in wrath and anger, determined to be as good, or rather as bad, as his word. Hannah remained, her heart overflowing with all the blended and contending emotions natural to a woman (I mean a woman that has a heart) in such a situation. Something of temper had mingled with the prudence of her resolution, and, as is always the case where a rash and hasty temper has led a generous mind astray, the reaction was proportionably strong. She blamed herself—she pitied William—she burst into a passion of tears; and it was not until the violence of her grief had awakened and terrified the little Emily, and that the necessity of pacifying the astonished child compelled her into the exertion of calming herself, (so salutary in almost all cases is the recurrence of our daily duties!) that she remembered the real danger of William's unhappy propensity, the dying injunctions of her mother, and those fearful scenes of her own childhood which still at times haunted her dreams. Her father, she had heard, had once been as kind, as gay, as engaging as William himself—as fond of her mother as William was of her. Where was the security that these qualities would not perish under the same evil influence and degrading habits? Her good mistress, too, praised and encouraged her, and for a while she was comforted.

Very, very soon the old feeling returned. Hannah had loved with the full and overflowing affection of a fond and faithful nature, and time and absence, which seldom fail to sweep away a slight and trivial fancy, only gave deeper root to an attachment like hers; her very heart clung to William. Her hours were passed in weaving visions of imaginary interviews, and framing to herself imaginary letters. She loved to plan fancied dialogues—to think how fondly he would woo, and how firmly she would reject,—for she thought it quite sure that she should reject; and yet she yearned (oh! how she yearned) for the opportunity of accepting.

But such opportunity was far away. The first thing she heard of him was, that he was realizing his own prediction by pursuing a course of continued intemperance at the Eight Bells; the next, that he was married!—married, it should seem, from hate and anger, not from love, to a young and thoughtless girl, portionless and improvident as himself. Nothing but misery could ensue from such a union;—nothing but misery did. Then came the beer-houses, with their fearful addition of temptation; and Hannah, broken-hearted at the accounts of his evil courses, and ashamed of the interest which she still continued to feel for one who could never be any thing to her again, rejoiced when General and Mrs. Maynard resolved to spend some time in Germany, and determined that she should accompany them.

From Germany the travellers proceeded to Italy, from Italy to Switzerland, and from Switzerland to France; so that nearly five years elapsed before they returned to Oakley Manor. Five years had wrought the usual changes amongst Hannah's old friends in that neighbourhood. The servants were nearly all new, the woman at the lodge had gone away, the keeper's daughter was married; so that, finding none who knew her anxiety respecting William, and dreading to provoke the answer which she feared awaited her inquiries, she forbore to ask any question respecting her former lover.

One evening, soon after their arrival, General Maynard invited his wife and family to go and see the cottage gardens at Belford. "We'll take even little Emily and Hannah," added he, "for it's a sight to do one's heart good—ay, fifty times more good than famous rivers and great mountains! and I would not have any of my children miss it for the fee-simple of the land, which, by the by, happens to belong to me. You remember my friend Howard writing to me when I was at Manheim, desiring to rent about thirty acres near Belford, which had just fallen vacant. Well, he has

fenced it and drained it, and made roads and paths, and divided it into plots of a quarter of an acre, more or less, and let it out for exactly the same money which he gives me, to the poor families in the town, chiefly to the inhabitants of that wretched suburb Silver-street, where the miserable hovels had not an inch of outlet, and the children were constantly grovelling in the mud and running under the horses' feet; passing their whole days in increasing and progressive demoralization; whilst their mothers were scolding and quarrelling and starving, and their fathers drowning their miseries at the beer-shops—a realization of Crabbe's gloomiest pictures! Only imagine what these gardens have done for these poor people! Every spare hour of the parents is given to the raising of vegetables for their own consumption, or for sale, or for the rearing and fatting that prime luxury of the English peasant, a pig. The children have healthy and pleasant employment. The artisan who can only find work for two or three days in the week is saved from the parish; he who has full pay is saved from the alehouse. A feeling of independence is generated, and the poor man's heart is gladdened and warmed by the conscious pride of property in the soil—by knowing and feeling that the spring shower and the summer sun are swelling and ripening his little harvest.

"I speak ardently," continued the General, rather ashamed of his own enthusiasm; "but I 've just been talking with that noble fellow Howard, who, in the midst of his many avocations, has found time for all this, and really I cannot help it. Whilst I was with him, in came one of the good folks to complain that his garden was rated. 'I'm glad of it,' replied Howard; 'it's a proof that you are a real tenant, and that this is not a charity affair.' And the man went off an inch taller. Howard confesses that he has not been able to resist the temptation of giving them back the amount of the rent in tools and rewards of one sort or other. He acknowledges that this is the weak part of his undertaking; but, as I said just now, he could not help it. Moreover, I doubt if the giving back the rent in that form be wrong—at least, if it be wrong to give it back at first. The working-classes are apt to be suspicious of their superiors—I am afraid that they have sometimes had reason to be so; and as the benefits of the system cannot be immediately experienced, it is well to throw in these little boons to stimulate them to perseverance. But here we are at Mr. Howard's," pursued the good General, as the carriage stopped at the gate of the brewery; for that admirable person was neither more nor less than a country brewer.

A beautiful place was that old-fashioned brewery, situated on an airy bit of rising ground at the outskirts of the town, the very last house in the borough, and divided from all other buildings by noble rows of elms, by its own spacious territory of orchard and meadow, and by the ample outlet, full of drays, and carts, and casks, and men, and horses, and all the life and motion of a great and flourishing business; forming, by its extent and verdure, so striking a contrast to the usual dense and smoky atmosphere, the gloomy yet crowded appearance of a brewer's yard.

The dwelling-house, a most picturesque erection, with one end projecting so as to form two sides of a square, the date, 1642, on the porch, and the whole front covered with choice creepers, stood at some distance from the road; and General Maynard and his lady hurried through it, as if knowing instinctively that on a fine summer evening Mrs. Howard's flower-garden was her drawing-room. What a flower-garden it was! A sunny, turfy knoll sloping abruptly to a natural and never-failing spring that divided it from a meadow rising on the other side with nearly equal abruptness; the steep descent dotted with flower-beds, rich, bright, fresh, and glowing, and the path that wound up the hill, leading through a narrow stone gateway—an irregular arch overrun with luxuriant masses of the narrow-leaved, white-veined ivy, which trailed its long pendent strings almost to the ground into a dark and shadowy walk, running along the top of a wild precipitous bank, clothed partly with forest-trees, oak, and elm, and poplar—partly with the finest exotics, cedars, cypresses, and the rare and graceful snow-drop-tree, of such growth and beauty as are seldom seen in England,—and terminated by a root-house, overhung by the branches of an immense acacia, now in the full glory of its white and fragrant blossoms, and so completely concealing all but the entrance of the old root-house, that it seemed as if that quiet retreat had no other roof than those bright leaves and chain-like flowers.

Here they found Mrs. Howard, a sweet and smiling woman, lovelier in the rich glow of her matronly beauty than she had been a dozen years before as the fair Jane Dorset, the belle of the country side. Here sat Mrs. Howard, surrounded by a band of laughing rosy children; and directed by her, and promising to return to the brewery to coffee, the General and his family proceeded by a private path to the cottage allotments.

Pleasant was the sight of those allotments to the right-minded and the kind, who love to contemplate order and regularity in the moral and physical world, and the cheerful and willing exertion of a well-directed and prosperous industry. It was a beautiful evening, late in June, and the tenants and their families were nearly all assembled in their small territories, each of which was literally filled with useful vegetables in every variety and of every kind. Here was a little girl weeding an onion-bed, here a boy sticking French beans; here a

woman gathering herbs for a salad, here a man standing in proud and happy contemplation of a superb plot of cauliflowers. Everywhere there was a hum of cheerful voices, as neighbour greeted neighbour, or the several families chatted amongst each other.

The General, who was warmly interested in the subject, and had just made himself master of the details, pointed out to Mrs. Maynard those persons to whom it had been most beneficial. "That man," said he, "who has, as you perceive, a double allotment, and who is digging with so much good-will, has ten children and a sickly wife, and yet has never been upon the parish for the last two years. That thin young man in the blue jacket is an out-door painter, and has been out of work these six weeks—(by the by, Howard has just given him a job)—and all that time has been kept by his garden. And that fine-looking fellow who is filling a basket with peas, whilst the pretty little child at his side is gathering strawberries, is the one whom Howard prizes most, because he is a person of higher qualities—one who was redeemed from intolerable drunkenness, retrieved from sin and misery, by this occupation. He is a journeyman shoemaker—a young widower—"

Hannah heard no more—she had caught sight of William, and William had caught sight of her; and in an instant her hands were clasped in his, and they were gazing on each other with eyes full of love and joy, and of the blessed tears of a true and perfect reconciliation.

"Yes, Hannah!" said William, "I have sinned, and deeply; but I have suffered bitterly, and most earnestly have I repented. It is now eighteen months since I have entered a public-house, and never will I set foot in one again. Do you believe me, Hannah?"

"Do I!" exclaimed Hannah, with a fresh burst of tears; "oh, what should I be made of if I did not?"

"And here are the peas and the strawberries," said William, smiling; "and the pinks and the roses," added he, more tenderly, taking a nosegay from his lovely little girl, as Hannah stooped to caress her; "and the poor motherless child—my only child! she has no mother, Hannah—will you be one to her?"

"Will I!" again echoed Hannah; "oh, William, will I not?"

"Remember, I am still only a poor journeyman—I have no money," said William.

"But I have," replied Hannah.

"And shall we not bless Mr. Howard," continued he, as, with his own Hannah on his arm, and his little girl holding by his hand, he followed Mrs. Maynard and the General.—"Shall we not bless Mr. Howard, who rescued me from idleness and its besetting temptations, and gave me pleasant and profitable employment in the cottage-garden?"

Note.—The system on which the above story is founded, is happily no fiction; and although generally appropriated to the agricultural labourer of the rural districts, it has, in more than one instance, been tried, with eminent success, amongst the poorer artisans in towns—to whom, above all other classes, the power of emerging from the (in every sense) polluted atmosphere of their crowded lanes and courts must be invaluable.

The origin of the system is so little known, and seems to me at once so striking and so natural, that I cannot resist the temptation of relating it almost in the words in which it was told to me by one of the most strenuous and judicious supporters of the cottage allotments.

John Denson was a poor working man, an agricultural labourer, a peasant, who, finding his weekly wages inadequate to the support of his family, and shrinking from applying for relief to the parish, sought and obtained of the lord of the manor, the permission to enclose a small plot of waste land, of which the value had hitherto been very trifling. By diligent cultivation he brought it to a state of great productiveness and fertility. This was afterwards sufficiently extended to enable him to keep a cow or two, to support his family in comfort and independence, and, ultimately, to purchase the fee-simple of the land. During the hours of relaxation, he educated himself sufficiently to enable him to relate clearly and correctly the result of his experience; and feeling it his duty to endeavour to improve the condition of his fellow-labourers, by informing them of the advantages which he had derived from industrious and sober habits, and the cultivation of a small plot of ground, he published a pamphlet called "The Peasant's Warning Voice," which, by attracting the attention of persons of humanity and influence, gave the first impulse to the system.

Among the earliest and most zealous of its supporters was Lord Braybrooke, to whom, next after John Denson, (for that noble-minded peasant must always claim the first place,) belongs the honour of promulgating extensively a plan replete with humanity and wisdom.

It was first carried into effect by his Lordship, several years ago, in the parish of Saffron Walden, a place then remarkable for misery and vice, but which is now conspicuous for the prosperity and good conduct of its poorer inhabitants. The paupers on the rates were very numerous, (amounting, I believe, to 135,) and are now comparatively few, and —which is of far more importance, since the reduction of the poor-rates is merely an incidental consequence of the system—the cases of crime at the Quarter Sessions have diminished in a similar proportion.

Since that period, the cottage allotments have been tried in many parts of England, and

always with success. Indeed, they can hardly fail, provided the soil be favourable to spade-husbandry, the rent not higher than that which would be demanded from a large occupier of land, the ground properly drained and fenced, and the labourers not encumbered with rules and regulations: for the main object being not merely to add to the physical comforts, but to raise the moral character of the working classes, especial care should be taken to induce and cherish the feeling of independence, and to prove to them that they are considered as tenants paying rent, and not as almsmen receiving charity.

I am happy to add, that the Mr. Howard of this little story (that is not *quite* his name) does actually exist. He is an eminent brewer in a small town in our neighbourhood, and has, also, another great brewery near London; he has a large family of young children and orphan relations, is an active magistrate, a sportsman, a horticulturist, a musician, a cricketer; is celebrated for the most extensive and the most elegant hospitality; and yet, has found time, not only to establish the system in his own parish, but, also, to officiate as secretary to a society for the promotion of this good object throughout the country. Heaven grant it success! I, for my poor part, am thoroughly convinced, that, if ever project were at once benevolent and rational, and practicable and wise, it is this of the cottage allotments; and I can hardly refrain from entreating my readers—especially my fair readers—to exert whatever power or influence they may possess in favour of a cause which has, for its sole aim and end, the putting down of vice and misery, and the diffusion of happiness and virtue.

THE CURATE OF ST. NICHOLAS'.

Amongst the most generally beloved, not merely of the clergy, but of the whole population of Belford, as that population stood some thirty years ago, was my good old friend, the Curate of St. Nicholas'; and, in my mind, he had qualities that might both explain and justify his universal popularity.

Belford is, at present, singularly fortunate in the parochial clergy. Of the two vicars, whom I have the honour and the privilege of knowing, one confers upon the place the ennobling distinction of being the residence of a great poet; whilst both are not only, in the highest sense of that highest word, gentlemen, in birth, in education, in manners, and in mind—but eminently popular in the pulpit, and, as parish priests, not to be excelled, even amongst the generally excellent clergymen of the Church of England—a phrase, by the way, which just at this moment sounds so like a war-cry, that I cannot too quickly disclaim any intention of inflicting a political dissertation on the unwary reader. My design is simply to draw a faithful likeness of one of the most peaceable members of the establishment.

Of late years, there has been a prodigious change in the body clerical. The activity of the dissenters, the spread of education, and the immense increase of population, to say nothing of that "word of power," Reform, have combined to produce a stirring spirit of emulation amongst the younger clergy, which has quite changed the aspect of the profession. Heretofore, the "church militant" was the quietest and easiest of all vocations; and the most slender and lady-like young gentleman, the "mamma's darling" of a great family, whose lungs were too tender for the bar, and whose frame was too delicate for the army, might be sent with perfect comfort to the snug curacy of a neighbouring parish, to read Horace, cultivate auriculas, christen, marry, and bury, about twice a quarter, and do duty once every Sunday. Now times are altered; prayers must be read and sermons preached twice a day at least, not forgetting lectures in Lent, and homilies at tide times; workhouses are to be visited; schools attended, boys and girls taught in the morning, and grown-up bumpkins in the evening; children are to be catechised; masters and mistresses looked after; hymn-books distributed; bibles given away; tract societies fostered amongst the zealous, and psalmody cultivated amongst the musical. In short, a curate, now-a-days, even a country curate, much more if his parish lie in a great town, has need of the lungs of a barrister in good practice, and the strength and activity of an officer of dragoons.

Now this is just as it ought to be. Nevertheless, I cannot help entertaining certain relentings in favour of the well-endowed churchman of the old school, round, indolent, and rubicund, at peace with himself and with all around him, who lives in quiet and plenty in his ample parsonage-house, dispensing with a liberal hand the superfluities of his hospitable table, regular and exact in his conduct, but not so precise as to refuse a Saturday night's rubber in his own person, or to condemn his parishioners for their game of cricket on Sunday afternoons; charitable in word and deed, tolerant, indulgent, kind, to the widest extent of that widest word; but, except in such wisdom (and it is of the best,) no wiser than that eminent member of the church, Parson Adams. In a word, exactly such a man as my good old friend the rector of Hadley, *cidevant* curate of St. Nicholas' in Belford, who has just passed the window in that venerable relique of antiquity, his one-horse chaise. Ah, we may see him still, through the budding leaves of the clustering China rose, as he is stopping to give a penny to poor lame Dinah Moore—

stopping, and stooping his short round person with no small effort, that he may put it into her little hand, because the child would have some difficulty in picking it up, on account of her crutches. Yes, there he goes, rotund and rosy, "a tun of a man," filling three parts of his roomy equipage; the shovel-hat with a rose in it, the very model of orthodoxy, overshadowing his white hairs and placid countenance; his little stunted foot-boy in a purple livery, driving a coach-horse as fat as his master; whilst the old white terrier, fatter still—his pet terrier Venom, waddles after the chaise (of which the head is let down, in honour, I presume, of this bright April morning,) much resembling in gait and aspect that other white waddling thing, a goose, if a goose were gifted with four legs.

There he goes, my venerable friend the Reverend Josiah Singleton, rector of Hadley-cum-Doveton, in the county of Southampton, and vicar of Delworth, in the county of Surrey. There he goes, in whose youth tract societies and adult schools *were not*, but who yet has done as much good and as little harm in his generation, has formed as just and as useful a link between the rich and the poor, the landlord and the peasant, as ever did honour to religion and to human nature. Perhaps this is only saying, in other words, that, under any system, benevolence and single-mindedness will produce their proper effects.

I am not, however, going to preach a sermon over my worthy friend—long may it be before his funeral sermon is preached! or even to write his *éloge*, for *éloges* are dull things; and to sit down with the intention of being dull,—to set about the matter with malice prepense (howbeit the calamity may sometimes happen accidentally,) I hold to be an unnecessary impertinence. I am only to give a slight sketch, a sort of bird's-eye view of my reverend friend's life, which, by the way, has been, except in one single particular, so barren of incidents, that it might almost pass for one of those proverbially uneventful narratives, The Lives of the Poets.

Fifty-six years ago, our portly rector—then, it may be presumed, a sleek and comely bachelor—left college, where he had passed through his examinations and taken his degrees with respectable mediocrity, and was ordained to the curacy of St. Nicholas' parish, in our market-town of Belford, where, by the recommendation of his vicar, Dr. Grampound, he fixed himself in the small but neat first-floor of a reduced widow gentlewoman, who endeavoured to eke out a small annuity by letting lodgings at eight shillings a-week, linen, china, plate, glass, and waiting included, and by keeping a toy-shop, of which the whole stock, fiddles, drums, balls, dolls, and shuttlecocks, might be safely appraised at under eight pounds, including a stately rocking-horse, the poor widow's *cheval de bataille*, which had occupied one side of Mrs. Martin's shop from the time of her setting up business, and still continued to keep his station uncheapened by her thrifty customers.

There, by the advice of Dr. Grampound, did he place himself on his arrival at Belford; and there he continued for full thirty years, occupying the same first-floor; the sitting-room—a pleasant apartment, with one window (for the little toy-shop was a corner-house) abutting on the High Bridge, and the other on the market-place—still, as at first, furnished with a Scotch carpet, cane chairs, a Pembroke table, and two hanging shelves, which seemed placed there less for their ostensible destination of holding books, sermons, and newspapers, than for the purpose of bobbing against the head of every unwary person who might happen to sit down near the wall; and the small chamber behind, with its tent-bed and dimity furniture, its mahogany chest of drawers, one chair and no table; with the self-same spare, quiet, decent landlady, in her faded but well-preserved mourning gown, and the identical serving maiden, Patty, a demure, civil, modest damsel, dwarfed, as it should seem, by constant curtsying,—since from twelve years upwards she had not grown an inch. Except the clock of time, which, however imperceptibly, does still keep moving, every thing about the little toy-shop in the market-place at Belford was at a stand-still. The very tabby-cat which lay basking on the hearth, might have passed for his progenitor of happy memory, who took his station there the night of Mr. Singleton's arrival; and the self-same hobby-horse still stood rocking opposite the counter, the admiration of every urchin who passed the door, and so completely the pride of the mistress of the domicile, that it is to be questioned—convenient as thirty shillings, lawful money of Great Britain, might sometimes have proved to Mrs. Martin—whether she would not have felt more reluctance than pleasure in parting with this, the prime ornament of her stock.

There, however, the rocking-horse remained; and there remained Mr. Singleton, gradually advancing from a personable youth to a portly middle-aged man; and obscure and untempting as the station of a curate in a country-town may appear, it is doubtful whether those thirty years of comparative poverty were not amongst the happiest of his easy and tranquil life.

Very happy they undoubtedly were. To say nothing of the comforts provided for him by his assiduous landlady and her civil domestic, both of whom felt all the value of their kind, orderly, and considerate inmate; especially as compared with the rackety recruiting officers and troublesome single gentlewomen who had generally occupied the first-floor; our curate was in prime favour with his vicar, Dr. Grampound, a stately pil-

lar of divinity, rigidly orthodox in all matters of church and state, who, having a stall in a distant cathedral, and another living by the sea-side, spent but little of his time at Belford, and had been so tormented by his three last curates—the first of whom was of avowedly whig politics, and more than suspected of Calvinistic religion; the second a fox-hunter, and the third a poet—that he was delighted to intrust his flock to a staid, sober youth of high-church and tory principles, who never mounted a horse in his life, and would hardly have trusted himself on Mrs. Martin's steed of wood; and whose genius, so far from carrying him into any flights of poesy, never went beyond that weekly process of sermon-making, which, as the doctor observed, was all that a sound divine need know of authorship. Never was curate a greater favourite with his principal. He has even been heard to prophesy that the young man would be a bishop.

Amongst the parishioners, high and low, Josiah was no less a favourite. The poor felt his benevolence, his integrity, his piety, and his steady kindness; whilst the richer classes (for in the good town of Belford few were absolutely rich) were won by his unaffected good-nature, the most popular of all qualities. There was nothing shining about the man, no danger of his setting the Thames on fire, and the gentlemen liked him none the worse for that; but his chief friends and allies were the ladies—not the young ladies, by whom, to say the truth, he was not so much courted, and whom, in return, he did not trouble himself to court; but the discreet mammas and grand-mammas, and maiden gentlewomen of a certain age, amongst whom he found himself considerably more valued, and infinitely more at home.

Sooth to say, our staid, worthy, prudent, sober young man, had at no time of his life been endowed with the buoyant and mercurial spirit peculiar to youth. There was in him a considerable analogy between the mind and the body. Both were heavy, sluggish, and slow. He was no strait-laced person either; he liked a joke in his own quiet way well enough; but as to encountering the quips, and cranks, and quiddities of a set of giddy girls, he could as soon have danced a cotillion. The gift was not in him. So with a wise instinct he stuck to their elders; called on them in the morning; drank tea with them at night; played whist, quadrille, cassino, backgammon, commerce, or lottery-tickets, as the party might require; told news and talked scandal as well as any woman of them all; accommodated a difference of four years' standing between the wife of the chief attorney and the sister of the principal physician; and was appealed to as absolute referee in a question of precedence between the widow of a post-captain and the lady of a colonel of volunteers, which had divided the whole gentility of the town into parties. In short, he was such a favourite in the female world, that when the ladies of Belford (on their husbands setting up a weekly card-club at the Crown) resolved to meet on the same night at each other's houses, Mr. Singleton was, by unanimous consent, the only gentleman admitted to the female coterie.

Happier man could hardly be, than the worthy Josiah in this fair company. At first, indeed, some slight interruptions to his comfort had offered themselves, in the shape of overtures matrimonial, from three mammas, two papas, one uncle, and (I grieve to say) one lady, an elderly young lady, a sort of dowager spinster in her own proper person, who, smitten with Mr. Singleton's excellent character, a small independence, besides his curacy in possession, and a trifling estate (much exaggerated by the gossip fame) in expectancy, and perhaps somewhat swayed by Dr. Grampound's magnificent prophecy, had, at the commencement of his career, respectively given him to understand that he might, if he chose, become nearly related to them. This is a sort of dilemma which a well-bred man, and a man of humanity, (and our curate was both,) usually feels to be tolerably embarrassing. Josiah, however, extricated himself with his usual straightforward simplicity. He said, and said truly, "that he considered matrimony a great comfort—that he had a respect for the state, and no disinclination to any of the ladies; but that he was a poor man, and could not afford so expensive a luxury." And with the exception of one mamma, who had nine unmarried daughters, and proposed waiting for a living, and the old young lady who had offered herself, and who kept her bed and threatened to die on his refusal, thus giving him the fright of having to bury his inamorata, and being haunted by her ghost—with these slight exceptions, every body took his answer in good part.

As he advanced in life, these sort of annoyances ceased—his staid, sober deportment, ruddy countenance, and portly person, giving him an air of being even older than he really was; so that he came to be considered as that privileged person, a confirmed old bachelor, the general beau of the female coterie, and the favourite marryer and christener of the town and neighbourhood. Nay, as years wore away, and he began to marry some whom he had christened, and to bury many whom he had married, even Dr. Grampound's prophecy ceased to be remembered, and he appeared to be as firmly rooted in Belford as in St. Nicholas's church, and as completely fixed in the toy-shop as the rocking-horse.

Destiny, however, had other things in store for him. The good town of Belford, as I have already hinted, is, to its own misfortune,

a poor place! an independent borough, and subject, accordingly, to the infliction (privilege, I believe, the voters are pleased to call it) of an election. For thirty years—during which period there had been seven or eight of these visitations — the calamity had passed over so mildly, that, except three or four days of intolerable drunkenness, (accompanied, of course, by a sufficient number of broken heads,) no other mischief had occurred; the two great families, whig and tory, might be said to divide the town,—for this was before the days of that active reformer, Stephen Lane,—having entered, by agreement, into a compromise to return one member each; a compact which might have held good to this time, had not some slackness of attention on the part of the whigs (the Blues, as they were called in election jargon) provoked the Yellow or tory part of the corporation, to sign a requisition to the Hon. Mr. Delworth, to stand as their second candidate, and produced the novelty of a sharp contest in their hitherto peaceful borough. When it came, it came with a vengeance. It lasted eight days—as long as it could last. The dregs of that cup of evil were drained to the very bottom. Words are faint to describe the tumult, the turmoil, the blustering, the brawling, the abuse, the ill-will, the battles by tongue and by fist, of that disastrous time. At last the Yellows carried it by six; and on a petition and scrutiny in the House of Commons, by one single vote: and as Mr. Singleton had been engaged on the side of the winning party, not merely by his own political opinions, and those of his ancient vicar, Dr. Grampound, but, also, by the predilections of his female allies, who were Yellows to a man, those who understood the ordinary course of such matters were not greatly astonished, in the course of the ensuing three years, to find our good curate rector of Hadley, vicar of Delworth, and chaplain to the new member's father. One thing, however, was remarkable, that amidst all the scurrility and ill blood of an election contest, and in spite of the envy which is sure to follow a sudden change of fortune, Mr. Singleton neither made an enemy nor lost a friend. His peaceful, unoffending character disarmed offence. He had been unexpectedly useful too to the winning party, not merely by knowing and having served many of the poorer voters, but by possessing one eminent qualification, not sufficiently valued or demanded in a canvasser: he was the best listener of the party,* and is said to have gained the half-dozen votes which decided the election, by the mere process of letting the people talk.

* A friend of mine, the lady of a borough member, who was very active in canvassing for her husband, once said to me, on my complimenting her on the number of votes she had obtained: "It was all done by listening. Our good friends, the voters, like to hear themselves talk."

This talent, which, it is to be presumed, he acquired in the ladies' club at Belford, and which probably contributed to his popularity in that society, stood him in great stead in the aristocratic circle of Delworth Castle. The whole family was equally delighted and amused by his *bonhommie* and simplicity; and he, in return, captivated by their kindness, as well as grateful for their benefits, paid them a sincere and unfeigned homage, which trebled their good-will. Never was so honest and artless a courtier. There was something at once diverting and amiable in the ascendency which every thing connected with his patron held over Mr. Singleton's imagination. Loyal subject as he unquestionably was, the king, queen, and royal family would have been as nothing in his eyes, compared with Lord and Lady Delworth, and their illustrious offspring. He purchased a new peerage, which, in the course of a few days, opened involuntarily on the honoured page which contained an account of their genealogy; his walls were hung with ground-plans of Hadley House, elevations of Delworth Castle, maps of the estate, prints of the late and present lords, and of a judge of Queen Anne's reign, and of a bishop of George the Second's, worthies of the family; he had, on his dining-room mantel-piece, models of two wings, once projected for Hadley, but which had never been built; and is said to have once bought an old head of the first Duke of Marlborough, which a cunning auctioneer had fobbed off upon him, by pretending that the great captain was a progenitor of his noble patron.

Besides this predominant taste, he soon began to indulge other inclinations at the rectory, which savoured a little of his old bachelor habits. He became a collector of shells and china, and a fancier of tulips; and when he invited the coterie of Belford ladies to partake of a syllabub, astonished and delighted them by the performance of a piping bullfinch of his own teaching, who executed the Blue Bells of Scotland in a manner not to be surpassed by the barrel-organ, by means of which this accomplished bird had been instructed. He engaged Mrs. Martin as his housekeeper, and Patty as his housemaid; set up the identical one-horse chaise in which he was riding to-day; became a member of the clerical dinner club; took in St. James's Chronicle and the Gentleman's Magazine; and was set down by every body as a confirmed old bachelor.

All these indications notwithstanding, nothing was less in his contemplation than to remain in that forlorn condition. Marriage, after all, was his predominant taste; his real fancy was for the ladies. He was fifty-seven, or thereabouts, when he began to make love; but he has amply made up for his loss of time, by marrying no less than four wives since that period. Call him Mr. Singleton, indeed!—why, his proper name would be Doubleton.

Four wives has he had, and of all varieties. His first was a pretty rosy smiling lass just come from school, who had known him all her life, and seemed to look upon him just as a school-girl does upon an indulgent grandpapa, who comes to fetch her home for the holidays. She was as happy as a bird, poor thing! during the three months that she lived with him — but then came a violent fever, and carried her off.

His next wife was a pale, sickly, consumptive lady, not over-young, for whose convenience he set up a carriage, and for whose health he travelled to Lisbon and Madeira, and Nice, and Florence, and Hastings, and Clifton, and all the places by sea and land, abroad and at home, where sick people go to get well,—at one of which she, poor lady, died.

Then he espoused a buxom, jolly, merry widow, who had herself had two husbands, and who seemed likely to see him out; but the small-pox came in her way, and she died also.

Then he married his present lady, a charming woman, neither fat nor thin, nor young nor old — not very healthy, nor particularly sickly — who makes him very happy, and seems to find her own happiness in making him so.

He has no children by any of his wives; but has abundance of adherents in parlour and hall. Half the poor of the parish are occasionally to be found in his kitchen, and his dining-room is the seat of hospitality, not only to his old friends of the town and his new friends of the country, but to all the families of all his wives. He talks of them (for he talks more now than he did at the Belford election, having fallen into the gossiping habit of "narrative old age") in the quietest manner possible, mixing, in a way the most diverting and the most unconscious, stories of his first wife and his second, of his present and his last. He seems to have been perfectly happy with all of them, especially with this. But if he should have the misfortune to lose that delightful person, he would certainly console himself, and prove his respect for the state, by marrying again; and such is his reputation as a superexcellent husband, especially in the main article of giving his wives their own way, that, in spite of his being even now an octogenarian, I have no doubt but there would be abundance of fair candidates for the heart and hand of the good Rector of Hadley.

KING HARWOOD.

The good town of Belford swarmed, of course, with single ladies — especially with single ladies of that despised denomination which is commonly known by the title of old maids. For gentlewomen of that description, especially of the less affluent class, (and although such a thing may be found here and there, a rich old maid is much rarer than a poor one,) a provincial town in this protestant country, where nunneries are not, is the natural refuge. A village life, however humble the dwelling, is at once more expensive — since messengers and conveyances, men and horses, of some sort, are in the actual country indispensable, — and more melancholy, for there is a sense of loneliness and insignificance, a solitude within doors and without, which none but an unconnected and unprotected woman can thoroughly understand. And London, without family ties, or personal importance, or engrossing pursuit,—to be poor and elderly, idle and alone in London, is a climax of desolation which every body can comprehend, because almost every one must, at some time or other, have felt, in a greater or less degree, the humbling sense of individual nothingness—of being but a drop of water in the ocean, a particle of sand by the seashore, which so often presses upon the mind amidst the bustling crowds and the splendid gaieties of the great city. To be rich or to be busy, is the necessity of London.

The poor and the idle, on the other hand, get on best in a country town. Belford was the paradise of ill-jointured widows and portionless old maids. There they met on the table-land of gentility, passing their mornings in calls at each other's houses, and their evenings in small tea-parties, seasoned with a rubber or a pool, and garnished with the little quiet gossiping (call it not scandal, gentle reader!) which their habits required. So large a portion of the population consisted of single ladies, that it might almost have been called a maiden town. Indeed, a calculating Cantab, happening to be there for the long vacation, amused his leisure by taking a census of the female householders, beginning with the Mrs. Davisons—fine alert old ladies, between seventy and eighty, who, being proud of their sprightliness and vigour, were suspected of adding a few more years to their age than would be borne out by the register,—and ending with Miss Letitia Pierce, a damsel on the confines of forty, who was more than suspected of a slight falsification of dates the converse way. I think he made the sum total, in the three parishes, amount to one hundred and seventy-four.

The part of the town in which they chiefly congregated, the lady's *quartier*, was one hilly corner of the parish of St. Nicholas', a sort of highland district, all made up of short rows, and pigmy places, and half-finished crescents, entirely uncontaminated by the vulgarity of shops, ill-paved, worse lighted, and so placed that it seemed to catch all the smoke of the more thickly inhabited part of the town, and was constantly encircled by a wreath of vapour, like Snowdon or Skiddaw.

Why the good ladies chose this elevated and inconvenient position, one can hardly tell; perhaps, because it was cheap; perhaps, because it was genteel—perhaps, from a mixture of both causes; I can only answer for the fact; and of this favourite spot the most favoured portion was a slender line of houses, tall and slim, known by the name of Warwick-terrace, consisting of a tolerably spacious dwelling at either end, and four smaller tenements linked two by two in the centre.

The tenants of Warwick-terrace were, with one solitary exception, exclusively female. One of the end houses was occupied by a comfortable-looking, very round Miss Blackall, a spinster of fifty, the richest and simplest of the row, with her parrot, who had certainly more words, and nearly as many ideas, as his mistress: her black footman, whose fine livery, white, turned up with scarlet, and glittering with silver lace, seemed rather ashamed of his "sober-suited" neighbours; the plush waistcoat and inexpressibles blushing as if in scorn. The other corner was filled by Mrs. Leeson, a kind-hearted, bustling dame, the great ends of whose existence were visiting and cards, who had, probably, made more morning calls and played a greater number of rubbers than any woman in Belford, and who boasted a tabby cat, and a head maid called Nanny, that formed a proper pendant to the parrot and Cæsar. Of the four centre habitations, one pair was the residence of Miss Savage, who bore the formidable reputation of a sensible woman—an accusation which rested, probably, on no worse foundation than a gruff voice and something of a vinegar aspect,—and of Miss Steele, who, poor thing, underwent a still worse calumny, and was called literary, simply because forty years ago she had made a grand poetical collection, consisting of divers manuscript volumes, written in an upright taper hand, and filled with such choice morceaux as Mrs. Greville's "Ode to Indifference," Miss Seward's "Monody on Major Andre," sundry translations of Metastasio's "Nice," and a considerable collection of enigmas, on which stock, undiminished and unincreased, she still traded; whilst the last brace of houses, linked together like the Siamese twins, was divided between two families, the three Miss Lockes,—whom no one ever dreamt of talking of as separate or individual personages—one should as soon have thought of severing the Graces, or the Furies, or the Fates, or any other classical trio, as of knowing them apart: the three Miss Lockes lived in one of these houses, and Mrs. Harwood and her two daughters in the other.

It is with the Harwoods only that we have to do at present.

Mrs. Harwood was the widow of the late and the mother of the present rector of Dighton, a family living, purchased by the father of her late husband, who, himself a respectable and affluent yeoman, aspired to a rivalry with his old landlord, the squire of the next parish; and, when he sent his only son to the university, established him in the rectory, married him to the daughter of an archdeacon, and set up a public house, called the Harwood Arms—somewhat to the profit of the Herald's Office, who had to discover or invent these illustrious bearings—had accomplished the two objects of his ambition, and died contented.

The son proved a bright pattern of posthumous duty; exactly the sort of rector that the good old farmer would have wished to see, did he turn out,—respectable, conscientious, always just, and often kind; but so solemn, so pompous, so swelling in deportment and grandiloquent in speech, that he had not been half a dozen years inducted in the living before he obtained the popular title of bishop of Dighton—a distinction which he seems to have taken in good part, by assuming a costume as nearly episcopal as possible, at all points, and copying, with the nicest accuracy, the shovel hat and buzz wig of the prelate of the diocese, a man of seventy-five. He put his coachman and footboy into the right clerical livery, and adjusted his household and modelled his behaviour according to his strictest notions of the stateliness and decorum proper to a dignitary of the church.

Perhaps he expected that the nickname by which he was so little aggrieved would some day or other be realized; some professional advancement he certainly reckoned upon. But, in spite of his cultivating most assiduously all profitable connexions—of his christening his eldest son "Earl" after a friend of good parliamentary interest, and his younger boy "King," after another—of his choosing one noble sponsor for his daughter Georgina, and another for his daughter Henrietta—he lived and died with no better preferment than the rectory of Dighton, which had been presented to him by his honest father five-and-forty years before, and to which his son Earl succeeded: the only advantage which his careful courting of patrons and patronage had procured for his family being comprised in his having obtained for his son King, through the recommendation of a noble friend, the situation of clerk at his banker's in Lombard-street.

Mrs. Harwood, a stately portly dame, almost as full of parade as her husband, had, on her part, been equally unlucky. The grand object of her life had been to marry her daughters, and in that she failed, probably because she had been too ambitious and too open in her attempts. Certain it is that, on the removal of the widow to Belford, poor Miss Harwood, who had been an insipid beauty, and whose beauty had turned into sallowness and haggardness, was forced to take refuge in ill health and tender spirits, and set up, as a last chance, for interesting; whilst Miss Hen-

rietta, who had five-and-twenty years before reckoned herself accomplished, still, though with diminished pretensions, kept the field—sang with a voice considerably the worse for wear, danced as often as she could get a partner, and flirted with beaux of all ages, from sixty to sixteen—chiefly, it may be presumed, with the latter, because of all mankind a shy lad from college is the likeliest to be taken in by an elderly miss. A wretched personage, under an affectation of boisterous gaiety, was Henrietta Harwood! a miserable specimen of that most miserable class of single women who, at forty and upwards, go about dressing and talking like young girls, and will not grow old.

Earl Harwood was his father slightly modernized. He was a tall, fair, heavy-looking man, not perhaps quite so solemn and pompous as "the bishop," but far more cold and supercilious. If I wished to define him in four letters, the little word "prig" would come very conveniently to my aid; and perhaps, in its compendious brevity, it conveys as accurate an idea of his manner as can be given: a prig of the slower and graver order was Earl Harwood.

His brother King, on the other hand, was a coxcomb of the brisker sort; *up*—not like generous champagne; but like cider, or perry, or gooseberry-wine, or "the acid flash of soda-water;" or, perhaps, more still like the slight froth that runs over the top of that abomination, a pot of porter, to which, by the way, together with the fellow abominations, snuff and cigars, he was inveterately addicted. Conceit and pretension, together with a dash of the worst because the finest vulgarity, that which thinks itself genteel, were the first and last of King Harwood. His very pace was an amble—a frisk, a skip, a strut, a prance—he could not walk; and he always stood on tiptoe, so that the heels of his shoes never wore out. The effect of this was, of course, to make him look less tall than he really was; so that, being really a man of middle height, he passed for short. His figure was slight, his face fair, and usually adorned with a smile half supercilious and half self-satisfied, and set off by a pair of most conceited-looking spectacles. There is no greater atrocity than his who shows you glass for eyes, and, instead of opening wide those windows of the heart, fobs you off with a bit of senseless crystal which conceals, instead of enforcing, an honest meaning—"there was no speculation in those *pebbles* which he did glare withal." For the rest, he was duly whiskered and curled; though the eyelashes, when by a chance removal of the spectacle they were discovered, lying under suspicion of sandiness; and, the whiskers and hair being auburn, it was a disputed point whether the barber's part of him consisted in dyeing his actual locks, or in a supplemental periwig: that the curls were of their natural colour, nobody believed that took the trouble to think about it.

But it was his speech that was the prime distinction of King Harwood: the pert fops of Congreve's comedies, Petulant, Witwoud, Froth, and Brisk, (pregnant names!) seemed but types of our hero. He never opened his lips (and he was always chattering) but to proclaim his own infinite superiority to all about him. He would have taught Burke to speak, and Reynolds to paint, and John Kemble to act. The Waverley novels would have been the better for his hints; and it was some pity that Shakspeare had not lived in these days, because he had a suggestion that would greatly have improved his Lear.

Nothing was too great for him to meddle with, and nothing too little; but his preference went very naturally with the latter, which amalgamated most happily with his own mind: and when the unexpected legacy of a plebeian great-aunt, the despised sister of his grandfather, the farmer, enabled him to leave quill-driving, of which he was heartily weary, and to descend from the high stool in Lombard-street, on which he had been perched for five-and-twenty years, there doubtless mingled with the desire to assist his family, by adding his small income to their still smaller one—for this egregious coxcomb was an excellent son and a kind brother, just in his dealings, and generous in his heart, when, through the thick coating of foppery, one could find the way to it—some wish to escape from the city, where his talents were, as he imagined, buried in the crowd, smothered against the jostling multitudes, and to emerge, in all his lustre, in the smaller and more select coteries of the country. On his arrival at Belford, accordingly, he installed himself, at once, as arbiter of fashion, the professed *beau garçon*, the lady's man of the town and neighbourhood; and having purchased a horse, and ascertained, to his great comfort, that his avocation as a banker's clerk was either wholly unsuspected in the county circles which his late father had frequented, or so indistinctly known, that the very least little white lie in the world would pass him off as belonging to the House, he boldly claimed acquaintance with every body in the county whose name he had ever heard in his life, and, regardless of the tolerably visible contempt of the gentlemen, proceeded to make his court to the ladies with might and with main.

He miscalculated, however, the means best fitted to compass his end. Women, however frivolous, do not like a frivolous man: they would as soon take a fancy to their mercer as to the man who offers to choose their silks; and if he will find fault with their embroidery, and correct their patterns, he must lay his account in being no more regarded by them than their milliner or their maid. Sooth to say, your fine lady is an ungrateful personage: she

accepts the help, and then laughs at the officious helper—sucks the orange and throws away the peel. This truth found King Harwood, when, after riding to London, and running all over that well-sized town to match, in German lamb's wool, the unmatchable brown and gold feathers of the game-cock's neck, which that ambitious embroideress, Lady Delaney, aspired to imitate in a table-carpet, he found himself saluted for his pains with the malicious sobriquet of King of the Bantams. This and other affronts drove him from the county society, which he had intended to enlighten and adorn, to the less brilliant circles of Belford, which, perhaps, suited his taste better, he being of that class of persons who had rather reign in the town than serve in the country; whilst his brother Earl, safe in cold silence and dull respectability, kept sedulously among his rural compeers, and was considered one of the most unexceptionable grace-sayers at a great dinner, of any clergyman in the neighbourhood.

To Belford, therefore, the poor King of the Bantams was content to come, thinking himself by far the cleverest and most fashionable man in the place; an opinion which, I am sorry to say, he had pretty much to himself. The gentlemen smiled at his pretensions, and the young ladies laughed, which was just the reverse of the impression which he intended to make. How the thing happened, I can hardly tell, for, in general, the young ladies of a country town are sufficiently susceptible to attention from a London man. Perhaps the man was not to their taste, as conceit finds few favourers; or, perhaps, they disliked the kind of attention, which consisted rather in making perpetual demands on their admiration, than in offering the tribute of his own; perhaps, also, the gentleman, who partook of the family fault, and would be young in spite of the register, was too old for them. However it befell, he was no favourite amongst the Belford belles.

Neither was he in very good odour with the mammas. He was too poor, too proud, too scornful, and a Harwood, in which name all the pretension of the world seemed gathered. Nay, he not only in his own person out-Harwooded Harwood, but was held accountable for not a few of the delinquencies of that obnoxious race, whose airs had much augmented since he had honoured Belford by his presence. Before his arrival, Miss Henrietta and her stately mamma had walked out, like the other ladies of the town, unattended: the King came, and they could not stir without being followed as their shadow by the poor little footboy, who formed the only serving-man of their establishment; before that *avatar* they dined at six, now seven was the family hour; and whereas they were wont, previously, to take that refection without alarming their neighbours, and causing Miss Blackall's parrot to scream, and Mrs. Leeson's cat to mew, now the solitary maid of all-work, or perchance the King himself, tinkled and jangled the door-bell, or the parlour-bell, to tell those who knew it before that dinner was ready, (I wonder he had not purchased a gong,) and to set every lady in the Row a moralizing on the sin of pride and the folly of pretension. Ah! if they who are at once poor and gently bred could but understand how safe a refuge from the contempt of the rich they would find in frank and open poverty! how entirely the pride of the world bends before a simple and honest humility!—how completely we, the poorest, may say with Constance (provided only that we imitate her action, and throw ourselves on the ground as we speak the words,) "Here is my throne,—let kings come bow to me!"—if they would but do this, how much of pain and grief they might save themselves! But this was a truth which the Harwoods had yet to discover.

Much of his unpopularity might, however, be traced to a source on which he particularly prided himself:—a misfortune which has befallen a wiser man.

Amongst his other iniquities the poor King of the Bantams had a small genius for music, an accomplishment that flattered at once his propensities and his pretensions, his natural love of noise and his acquired love of consequence. He sung, with a falsetto that rang through one's head like the screams of a young peacock, divers popular ballads in various languages, very difficult to distinguish each from each;* he was a most pertinacious and intolerable scraper on the violincello, an instrument which it is almost as presumptuous to touch, unless finely, as it is to attempt and to fail in an epic poem or an historical picture; and he showed the extent and variety of his want of power, by playing quite as ill on the flute, which again may be compared to a failure in the composition of an acrostic, or the drawing of a butterfly. Sooth to say, he was equally bad in all; and yet he contrived to be quite as great a pest to the unmusical part of society—by far the larger part in Belford certainly, and, I suspect, everywhere—as if he had actually been the splendid performer he fancied himself. Nay, he was even a greater

* Non-articulation is the besetting sin of flourishing singers of all ranks. It is only the very best and the very highest who condescend, not merely to give expression to their words, but words to their expression. Some, of a far better order of taste than Mr. King Harwood, are addicted to this tantalizing defect. I remember an instance of two such, who were singing very sweetly, as to mere musical sound, some Italian duets, when an old gentleman, quite of the old school, complained that he could not understand them. They then politely sung an English air; but as they had omitted to announce their intention, he never discovered the change of language, and repeated his old complaint, "Ah, I dare say it's all very fine; but I can't understand it!"

nuisance than a fine player can be; for if music be, as Mr. Charles Lamb happily calls it, "measured malice," malice out of all measure must be admitted to be worse still.

Generally speaking, people who dislike the art deserve to be as much bored as they are by the "concord of sweet sounds." There is not an English lady in a thousand who, when asked if she be fond of music, has the courage enough to say, No: she thinks it would be rude to do so; whereas, in my opinion, it is a civil way of getting out of the scrape, since, if the performance be really such as commands admiration, (and the very best music *is* an enjoyment as exquisite as it is rare,*) the delight evinced comes as a pleasant surprise, or as a graceful compliment; and if (as is by very far most probable) the singing chance to be such as one would rather not hear, why then one has, at least, the very great comfort of not being obliged to simper and profess oneself pleased, but may seem as tired, and look as likely to yawn as one will, without offering any particular affront, or incurring any worse imputation than that of being wholly without taste for music—a natural defect, at which the amateur who has been excruciating one's ears vents his contempt in a shrug of scornful pity, little suspecting how entirely (as is often the case with that amiable passion) the contempt is mutual.

Now there are certain cases under which the evil of music is much mitigated: when one is not expected to listen, for instance, as at a large party in London, or, better still, at a great house in the country, where there are three or four rooms open, and one can get completely out of the way, and hear no more of the noise than of a peal of bells in the next parish. Music, under such circumstances, may be endured with becoming philosophy. But the poor Belfordians had no such resource. Their parties were held, at the best, in two small drawing-rooms laid into one by the aid of folding-doors; so that when Mr. King, accompanied by his sister Henrietta, who drummed and strummed upon the piano like a boarding-school Miss, and sung her part in a duet with a voice like a raven, began his eternal vocalization, (for, never tired of hearing himself, he never dreamt of leaving off until his unhappy audience parted for the night,)—when once the self-delighted pair began, the deafened whist-table groaned in dismay; lottery-tickets were at a discount; commerce at a stand-still; Pope Joan died a natural death, and the pool of quadrille came to an untimely end.

The reign of the four kings, so long the mild and absolute sovereigns of the Belford parties, might be said to be over, and the good old ladies, long their peaceable and loving subjects, submitted with peevish patience to the yoke of the usurper. They listened and they yawned; joined in their grumbling by the other vocalists of this genteel society, the singing young ladies and manœuvring mammas, who found themselves literally "pushed from their stools," their music-stools, by the Harwood monopoly of the instrument, as well as affronted by the Bantam King's intolerance of all bad singing except his own. How long the usurpation would have lasted, how long the discontent would have been confined to hints and frowns, and whispered mutterings, and very intelligible innuendoes, without breaking into open rebellion,—in other words, how long it would have been before King Harwood was sent to Coventry, there is no telling. He himself put an end to his musical sovereignty, as other ambitious rulers have done before him, by an overweening desire to add to the extent of his dominions.

Thus it fell out.

One of the associations which did the greatest honour to Belford, was a society of amateur musicians—chiefly tradesmen, imbued with a real love of the art, and a desire to extend and cultivate an amusement which, however one may laugh at the affectation of musical taste, is, when so pursued, of a very elevating and delightful character—who met frequently at each other's houses for the sake of practice, and, encouraged by the leadership of an accomplished violin-player, and the possession of two or three voices of extraordinary brilliancy and power, began about this time to extend their plan, to rehearse two or three times a week at a great room belonging to one of the society, and to give amateur concerts at the Town-hall.

Very delightful these concerts were. Every man exerted himself to the utmost, and, accustomed to play the same pieces with the same associates, the performance had much of the unity which makes the charm of family music. They were so unaffected, too, so thoroughly unpretending—there was such genuine good taste, so much of the true spirit of enjoyment, and so little of trickery and display, that the audience, who went prepared to be indulgent, were enchanted; the amateur concerts became the fashion of the day, and all the elegance and beauty of the town and neighbourhood crowded to the Belford Town-hall. This was enough for Mr. King Harwood. He had attended once as a hearer, and he instantly determined to be heard. It was pretermitting his dignity, to be sure, and his

* The circumstances under which music is heard often communicate to it a charm not its own. A military band, for instance, in the open air, wind instruments upon the water, the magnificent masses of the Romish church, or the organ pealing along the dim aisles of our own venerable cathedrals, will scarcely fail to exercise a strong power over the imagination. There is another association in music, that is perhaps more delightful than all: the young innocent girl who trips about the house, carolling snatches of songs with her round, clear, youthful voice—gay, and happy, and artless as an uncaged bird.

brother, Earl, would have been dumb for ever before he would have condescended to such an association. But the vanity of our friend the King was of a more popular description. Rather than not get applause, he would have played Punch at Belford fair; acccordingly, he offered himself as a tenor singer to the amateur society, and they, won by his puffs of his musical genius,—which, to say the truth, had about them the prevailing power which always results from the speaker's perfect faith in his own assertions, the self-deluding faith which has never failed to make converts, from Mahomet down to Joanna Southcot,—they, won to belief, and civilly unwilling to put his talents to the proof, accepted his services for the next concert.

Luckless King Harwood! He to sing in concerted pieces! Could not he have remembered that unhappy supper of the Catch and Glee Club in Finsbury-square, where, for his sake, "Non Nobis, Domine," was hissed, and "Glorious Apollo" well-nigh damned? He to aspire to the dictatorship of country musicians! Had he wholly forgotten that still more unlucky morning, when, aspiring to reform the church music of Dighton, he and the parish clerk and the obedient sexton, began, as announced and pre-arranged, to warble Luther's Hymn; whilst all the rest of the singing gallery, three clarionets, two French horns, the bassoon, and the rustic vocalists struck up the Hundreth Psalm; and the uninstructed charity children, catching the last word as given out by the clerk, completed the triple chain, not of harmony, but of discord, by screaming out at the top of their shrill childish voices the sweet sounds of the Morning Hymn? Was that day forgotten, and that day's mortification?—when my lord, a musical amateur of the first water, whom the innovation was intended to captivate, was fain to stop his cognoscentic ears, whilst Lady Julia held her handkerchief to her fair face to conceal her irrepressible laughter, and the unhappy source of this confusion ran first of all to the Rectory to escape from the tittering remarks of the congregation, and then half-way to London to escape from the solemn rebuke of the Rector? Could that hour be forgotten?

I suppose it was. Certain he offered himself and was accepted; and was no sooner installed a member of the Society, than he began his usual course of dictation and finding fault. His first contest was that very fruitful ground of dispute, the concert bill. With the instrumental pieces he did not meddle; but in the vocal parts the Society had wisely confined themselves to English words and English composers, to the great horror of the new *primo tenore*, who proposed to substitute Spohr and Auber and Rossini, for Purcell and Harrington and Bishop, and to have "no vulgar English name," in the whole bill of fare.

"To think of the chap!" exclaimed our good friend, Stephen Lane, when Master King proposed a quartet from the "Cenerentola," in lieu of the magnificent music which has well-nigh turned one of the finest tragedies in the world into the very finest opera—(I mean, of course, Matthew Locke's music in Macbeth)—"To think of the chap!" exclaimed Stephen, who had sung Hecate with admirable power and beauty for nearly forty years, and whose noble bass voice still retained its unrivalled richness of tone—"To think of his wanting to frisk me into some of his parley-voos stuff, and daring to sneer and snigger not only at old Locke's music!—and I'll thank any of your parley-voos to show me finer,—but at Shakspeare himself! I don't know much of poetry, to be sure," said Stephen; "but I know this, that Shakspeare's the poet of old England, and that every Englishman's bound to stand up for him, as he is for his country or his religion; and, dang it, if that chap dares to fleer at him again before my face, I'll knock him down—and so you may tell him, Master Antony," pursued the worthy butcher, somewhat wroth against the leader, whose courtesy had admitted the offending party,—"so you may tell him; and I tell you, that if I had not stood up all my life against the system, I'd strike, and leave you to get a bass where you could. I hate such puppies, and so you may tell him!" So saying, Stephen walked away, and the concert bill remained unaltered.

If (as is possible) there had been a latent hope that the new member would take offence at his want of influence in the programme of the evening's amusement, and "strike" himself, the hope was disappointed. Most punctual in the orchestra was Mr. King Harwood, and most delighted to perceive a crowded and fashionable audience. He placed himself in a conspicuous situation and a most conspicuous attitude, and sat out first an overture of Weber's, then the fine old duet, "Time has not thinned my flowing hair," and then the cause of quarrel, "When shall we three meet again," in which Stephen had insisted on his bearing no part, with scornful *sang froid*—although the Hecate was so superb, and the whole performance so striking, that, as if to move his spleen, it had been rapturously encored. The next piece was "O Nanny!" harmonized for four voices, in which he was to bear a part—and a most conspicuous part he did bear, sure enough! The essence of that sweetest melody, which "custom cannot stale," is, as every one knows, its simplicity; but simplicity made no part of our vocalist's merits! No one that heard him will ever forget the trills, and runs, and shakes, the cadences and flourishes, of that "O Nanny!"—The other three voices (one of which was Stephen's,) stopped in astonishment, and the panting violins "toiled after him in vain." At last, Stephen Lane, somewhat provoked at having been put out of

his own straight course by any thing,—for, as he said afterwards, he thought he could have sung "O Nanny," in the midst of an earthquake, and determined to see if he could stop the chap's flourishes,—suddenly snatched the fiddle-stick out of the hands of the wondering leader, and jerked the printed glee out of the white-gloved hands of the singer, as he was holding the leaves with the most delicate affectation — sent them sailing and fluttering over the heads of the audience, and then, as the King, nothing daunted, continued his variations on "Thou wert fairest," followed up his blow by a dexterous twitch with the same convenient instrument at the poor beau's caxon, which flew spinning along the ceiling, and alighted at last on one of the ornaments of the centre chandelier, leaving the luckless vocalist with a short crop of reddish hair, slightly bald and somewhat grizzled, a fierce pair of whiskers curled and dyed, and a most chap-fallen countenance, in the midst of the cheers, the bravos, and the encores of the diverted audience, who laughed at the exploit from the same resistless impulse that tempted honest Stephen to the act.

"Flesh and blood could not withstand it, man!" exclaimed he, apologetically, holding out his huge red fist, which the crest-fallen beau was far too angry to take; "but I'm quite ready to make the wig good; I'll give you half a dozen, if you like, in return for the fun; and I'd recommend their fitting tighter, for really it's extraordinary what a little bit of a jerk sent that fellow flying up to the ceiling just like a bird. The fiddlestick's none the worse—nor you either, if you could but think so."

But in the midst of this consolatory and conciliatory harangue, the discomfited hero of the evening disappeared, leaving his "O Nanny!" under the feet of the company, and his periwig perched on the chandelier over their heads.

The result of this adventure was, in the first place, a most satisfactory settlement of the question of wig or no wig, which had divided the female world of Belford; and a complete cure of his musical mania on the part of its hero. He never sang a note again, and has even been known to wince at the sound of a barrel-organ; whilst those little vehicles of fairy tunes, French work-boxes and snuff-boxes, were objects of his especial alarm. He always looked as if he expected to hear the sweet air of "O Nanny!" issuing from them.

One would have thought that such a calamity would have been something of a lesson. But vanity is a strong-rooted plant that soon sprouts out again, crop it off closely as you may, and the misadventure wrought but little change in his habits. For two or three days, (probably, whilst a new wig was making) he kept his room, sick or sulky; then he rode over to Dighton, for two or three days more; after which he returned to Belford, revisited his old haunts and renewed his old ways, strutting and skipping, as usual, the loudest at public meetings — the busiest on committees — the most philosophical member of the Philosophical Society, at which, by the way, adventuring with all the boldness of ignorance on certain chemical experiments, he very literally burnt his fingers; and the most horticultural of the horticulturalists, marching about in a blue apron, like a real gardener, flourishing watering-pots, cheapening budding-knives, and boasting of his marvels in grafting and pruning, although the only things resembling trees in his mother's slip of a garden were some smoky China roses that would not blow, and a few blighted currants that refused to ripen.

But these were trifles. He attended all the more serious business of the town and country — was a constant man at the vestry, although no householder, and at borough and county meetings, although he had not a foot of land in the world. He attended rail-road meetings, navigation meetings, turnpike meetings, gas-work meetings, paving meetings, Macadamizing meetings, water-work meetings, cottage-allotment meetings, anti-slave-trade meetings, education meetings of every sort, and dissenting meetings of all denominations; never failed the bench; was as punctual at an inquest as the coroner, at the quarter-sessions as the chairman, at the assizes as the judge, and hath been oftener called to order by the court, and turned out of the grand-jury room by the foreman, than any other man in the county. In short, as Stephen Lane, whom he encountered pretty frequently in the course of his perambulations, pithily observed of him, "A body was sure to find the chap wherever he had no business."

Stephen, who, probably, thought he had given him punishment enough, regarded the poor King after the fashion in which his great dog Smoker would look upon a cur whom he had tossed once and disdained to toss again—a mixture of toleration and contempt. The utmost to which the good butcher was ever provoked by his adversary's noisiest nonsense or pertest presumption, was a significant nod towards the chandelier from whence the memorable wig had once hung pendent, a true escutcheon of pretence; or, if that memento were not sufficient, the whistling a few bars of "Where thou wert fairest,"—a gentle hint, which seldom failed of its effect in perplexing and dumfounding the orator.

They were, however, destined to another encounter; and, as often happens in this world of shifting circumstance, the result of that encounter brought out points of character which entirely changed their feelings and position towards each other.

Stephen had been, as I have before said, or

meant to say, a mighty cricketer in his time; and, although now many stone too heavy for active participation, continued as firmly attached to the sport, as fond of looking on and promoting that most noble and truly English game, as your old cricketer, when of a hearty and English character, is generally found to be. He patronised and promoted the diversion on all occasions, formed a weekly club at Belford, for the sake of practice, assigned them a commodious meadow for a cricket-ground, trained up sons and grandsons to the exercise, made matches with all the parishes round, and was so sedulous in maintaining the credit of the Belford Eleven, that not a lad came into the place as an apprentice or a journeyman — especially if he happened to belong to a cricketing county — without Stephen's examining into his proficiency in his favourite accomplishment. Towards blacksmiths, who, from the development of muscular power in the arms, are often excellent players, and millers, who are good cricketers, one scarcely knows why — it runs in the trade — his attention was particularly directed, and his researches were at last rewarded by the discovery of a first-rate batsman, at a forge nearly opposite his own residence.

Caleb Hyde, the handicraftsman in question, was a spare, sinewy, half-starved looking young man, as ragged as the wildest colt he ever shod: Humphry Clinker was not in a more unclothed condition when he first shocked the eyes of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble; and Stephen seeing that he was a capital ironsmith, and sure to command good wages, began to fear that his evil plight arose, as in nine cases out of ten raggedness does arise, from the gentle seductions of the beer-houses. On inquiry, however, he found that his protegé was as sober as if there was not a beer-house in the world; that he had been reduced to his present unseemly plight by a long fever; and that his only extravagance consisted in his having, ever since he was out of his apprenticeship, supported by the sweat of his brow an aged mother and a sickly sister, for whose maintenance, during his own tedious illness, he had pawned his clothes, rather than allow them to receive relief from the parish. This instance of affectionate independence won our butcher's heart.

"That's what I call acting like a man and an Englishman!" exclaimed honest Stephen. "I never had a mother to take care of," continued he, pursuing the same train of thought, —"that is, I never knew her; and an unnatural jade she must have been: but nobody belonging to me should ever have received parish money whilst I had the use of my two hands; — and this poor fellow must be seen to!"

And as an induction to the more considerable and more permanent benefits which he designed for him, he carried Caleb off to the cricket-ground, where there was a grand rendezvous of all the amateurs of the neighbourhood, beating up for recruits for a great match to come off at Danby-park on the succeeding week.

"They give their players a guinea a day," thought Stephen; "and I'd bet fifty guineas that Sir Thomas takes a fancy to him."

Now, the Belford cricket-ground happened to be one of Mr. King Harwood's many lounges. He never, to be sure, condescended to play there; but it was an excellent opportunity to find fault with those that did, to lay down the law on disputed points, to talk familiarly of the great men at Lord's, and to boast how, in one match, on that classic ground, he had got more notches than Mr. Ward, and had caught out Mr. Budd, and bowled out Lord Frederick. Any body, to have heard him, would have thought him, in his single person, able to beat a whole eleven. That marquée, on the Belford cricket-ground, was the place to see King Harwood in his glory.

There he was, on the afternoon in question, putting in his word on all occasions; a word of more importance than usual, because Sir Thomas being himself unable to attend, his steward, whom he had sent to select the auxiliaries for the great match, was rather more inclined than his master would have been to listen to his suggestions, (a circumstance which may be easily accounted for by the fact, that the one did know him, and the other did not,) and, therefore, in more danger of being prejudiced by his scornful disdain of poor Caleb, towards whom he had taken a violent aversion, first as a protegé of Mr. Lane, and, secondly, as being very literally an "unwashed artificer;" Stephen having carried him off from the forge without even permitting the indispensable ablutions, or the slight improvement in costume which his scanty wardrobe would have permitted.

"He would be a disgrace to your eleven, Mr. Miller!" said his Bantamic Majesty to the civil steward; "Sir Thomas would have to clothe him from top to toe. There's the cricketer that I should recommend," added he, pointing to a young linendraper, in nankeen shorts, light shoes, and silk stockings. "He understands the proper costume, and is, in my mind, a far prettier player. Out!" shouted "the skipping King," as Caleb, running a little too hard, saved himself from being stumped out by throwing himself down at full length, with his arm extended, and the end of his bat full two inches beyond the stride; "Out! fairly out!"

"No out!" vociferated the butcher; "it's a thing done every day. He's not out, and you are!" exclaimed the man of the cleaver.

But the cry of "out" having once been raised, the other side, especially the scout who had picked up and tossed the ball, and

the wicket-keeper who had caught it from the scout, and the bowler—a dogged surly old player, whom Caleb's batting had teased not a little—joined in the clamour; and forthwith a confusion and a din of tongues, like that of the Tower of Babel, arose amongst cricketers and standers-by; from the midst of which could be heard at intervals, "Lord's Ground," "Howard," "Mr. Ward," Mr. Budd," "Lord Frederick," and "The Marybone Club," in the positive dogmatical dictatorial tones of Mr. King Harwood; and the apparently irrelevant question, "O Nanny, wilt thou gang with me?" sung, in his deep and powerful bary-tone voice, by Stephen Lane.

At last, from mere weariness, there was a pause in the uproar; and our honest butcher, wiping his fine broad manly face, exclaimed, half in soliloquy,

"To be sure, it's foolish enough to make such a squabbling at a mere practising bout among ourselves; but one can't help being aggravated to hear a chap, who sits there never touching a bat, lay down the law as if he could beat all England; whereas it's my firm opinion that he never played in a match in his life. If he had, he'd want to play now. I defy a man that has been a cricketer not to feel a yearning, like, after the game when it's going on before his eyes; and I would not mind laying a smartish wager that his playing is just as bad as his singing."

"I'll play any man for thirty pounds, the best of two innings, at single wicket!" replied King, producing the money.

"Done," replied Stephen; "and Caleb, here, shall be your man."

"Surely, Mr. Lane," responded the affronted beau, "you can't intend to match me with a dirty ragged fellow like that? Of course I expect something like equality in my opponent—some decent person. No one could expect me to play against a journeyman blacksmith."

"Why not?" demanded the undaunted radical; "we're all the same flesh and blood, whether clean or dirty—all sprung from Adam. And as to Caleb, poor fellow! who pawned his clothes to keep his old mother and his sick sister, I only wish we were all as good. Howsomever, as that match would be, as you say, rather unequal—for I'll be bound that he'd beat you with his right hand tied behind him,—why, it would not be fair to put him against you. Here's my little grandson Gregory, who wont be ten years old till next Martinmas—he shall play you; or, dang it, man," shouted Stephen, "I'll play you myself! I have not taken a bat in hand these twenty years," continued he, beginning, in spite of the remonstrances of his friends, especially of poor Caleb, to strip off his coat and waistcoat, and prepare for the encounter,—"I have not touched bat or ball for these twenty years, but I'm as sure of beating that chap as if he was a woman. So hold your tongue, Peter Jenkins! be quiet, Caleb! Don't you prate about your grandmother, Gregory; for play I will. And get you ready, Master Harwood, for I mean to bowl you out at the first ball."

And Master King did make ready accordingly; tied one handkerchief round his white trousers and another round his waist, lamented the want of his nankeens and his cricketing pumps, poised the bats, found fault with the ball, and finally placed himself in an attitude at the wicket; and having won the toss, prepared to receive the ball, which Stephen on his part was preparing very deliberately to deliver.

Stephen in his time had been an excellent fast bowler; and as that power was not affected by his size, (though probably somewhat impaired by want of practice,) and his confidence in his adversary's bad play was much increased by the manner in which he stood at his wicket, he calculated with the most comfortable certainty on getting him out whenever he liked; and he was right; the unlucky King could neither stop nor strike. He kept no guard over his wicket; and in less than three minutes the stumps rattled without his having once hit the ball.

It was now Stephen's turn to go in—the fattest cricketer of a surety that ever wielded bat. He stood up to his wicket like a man, and considering that King's bowling was soon seen to be as bad as his hitting—that is to say, as bad as any thing could be—there was every chance of his stopping the ball, and continuing in for three hours; but whether he would get a notch in three days, whether dear Stephen Lane *could* run, was a problem. It *was* solved, however, and sooner than might have been expected. He gave a mighty hit—a hit that sent her spinning into the hedge at the bottom of the ground—a hit, of which any body else would have made three even at single wicket; and, setting out on a leisurely long-trot, contrived to get home, without much inconvenience, just before the panting King arrived at his ground. In his next attempt at running, he was not so fortunate: his antagonist reached the wicket whilst he was still in mid-career, so that his innings was over, and Mr. King Harwood had to go in against one.

Alas! he found it one too many! At the very second ball, he made a hit—his first hit—and unluckily a hit up, and Stephen caught him out by the mere exertion of lifting his right arm; so that the match was won at a single innings, the account standing thus:—

King Harwood, first innings . . . 0
Ditto second innings . . 0
Stephen Lane, first innings . . . 1

It would have been difficult to give the scorers on both sides less trouble.

Stephen was charmed with his success, laughing like a child for very glee, tossing the ball into the air, and enjoying his triumph

with unrestrained delight, until his antagonist, who had borne his defeat with much equanimity, approached him with the amount of his bet: it then seemed to strike him suddenly, that Mr. Harwood was a gentleman, and poor, and that thirty pounds was too much for him to lose.

"No, no, sir," said Stephen, gently putting aside the offered notes; "all's right now: we've had our frolic out, and it's over. 'Twas foolish enough, at the best, in an old man like me, and so my dame will say; but, as to playing for money, that's quite entirely out of the question."

"These notes are yours, Mr. Lane," replied King Harwood, gravely.

"No such thing, man," rejoined Stephen, more earnestly; "I never play for money, except now and then a sixpenny game at all-fours, with Peter Jenkins there. I hate gambling. We've all of us plenty to do with our bank-notes, without wasting them in such tom-foolery. Put 'em up, man, do. Keep 'em till we play the return match, and that won't be in a hurry, I promise you; I've had enough of this sport for one while," added Stephen, wiping his honest face, and preparing to reassume his coat and waistcoat; "put up the notes, man, can't ye!"

"As I said before, Mr. Lane, this money is yours. You need not scruple taking it; for, though I am a poor man, I do not owe a farthing in the world. The loss will occasion me no inconvenience. I had merely put aside this sum to pay Charles Wither the difference between my bay mare and his chestnut horse; and now I shall keep the mare; and, perhaps, after all, she is the more useful roadster of the two. You *must* take the money."

"I'll be hanged if I do!" exclaimed Stephen, struck with sudden and unexpected respect at the frank avowal of poverty, the good principles, and the good temper of this speech. "How can I? Wasn't it my own rule, when I gave this bit of ground to the cricketers, that nobody should ever play in it for any stake, high or low? A pretty thing it would be if I, a reformer of forty years' standing, should be the first man to break a law of my own making! Besides, 't is setting a bad example to these youngsters, and ought not to be done — and sha'n't be done," continued Stephen, waxing positive. "You've no notion what an obstinate old chap I can be! Better let me have my own way."

"Provided you let me have mine. You say you cannot take these notes—I feel that I cannot keep them. Suppose we make them over to your friend Caleb, to repair his wardrobe?"

"Dang it, you are a real good fellow!" shouted Stephen, in an ecstasy, grasping King Harwood's hand, and shaking it as if he would shake it off; "a capital fellow! a true-born Englishman! and I beg your pardon, from my soul, for that trick of the wig, and all my flouting and fleering before and since. You've taught me a lesson that I sha'n't forget in a hurry. Your heart's in the right place; and when that's the case, why a little finery and nonsense signifies no more than the patches upon Caleb's jacket, or the spots on a bullock's hide, just skin-deep, and hardly that. I've a respect for you, man! and I beg your pardon over and over." And again and again he wrung King Harwood's hand in his huge red fist; whilst borne away by his honest fervency, King returned the pressure and walked silently home, wondering a little at his own gratification, for a chord had been struck in his bosom that had seldom vibrated before, and the sensation was as new as it was delightful.

The next morning little Gregory Lane made his appearance at Warwick-terrace, mounted on Charles Wither's beautiful chestnut.

"Grandfather sends his duty, sir," said the smiling boy, jumping down, and putting the bridle into King Harwood's hand, "and says that you had your way yesterday, and that he must have his to-day. He's as quiet as a lamb," added the boy, already, like Harry Blount in Marmion, a "sworn horse-courser;" "and such a trotter! He'll carry you twelve miles an hour with ease." And King Harwood accepted the offering; and Stephen and he were good friends ever after.

THE CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

Of all interesting objects, children, out of doors, seem to me the most interesting to a lover of nature. In a room, I may, perhaps, be allowed to exercise my privilege as an old maid, by confessing that they are in my eyes less engaging. If well-behaved, the poor little things seem constrained and *gênés*— if ill-conducted, the *gêne* is transferred to the unfortunate grown-up people, whom their noise distracts and their questions interrupt. Within doors, in short, I am one of the many persons who like children in their places,—that is to say, in any place where I am not. But out of doors there is no such limitation: from the gypsy urchins under a hedge, to the little lords and ladies in a ducal demesne, they are charming to look at, to watch, and to listen to. Dogs are less amusing, flowers are less beautiful, trees themselves are less picturesque.

I cannot even mention them without recalling to my mind twenty groups or single figures, of which Gainsborough would have made at once a picture and a story. The little aristocratic-looking girl, for instance, of some five or six years old, whom I used to see two years ago, every morning at breakfast-time, tripping along the most romantic street in England, (the High-street in Oxford,) attend-

ed or escorted, it is doubtful which, by a superb Newfoundland dog, curly and black, carrying in his huge mouth her tiny workbag, or her fairy parasol, and guarding with so true a fidelity his pretty young lady, whilst she, on her part, queened it over her lordly subject with such diverting gravity, seeming to guide him whilst he guided her — led, whilst she thought herself leading, and finally deposited at her daily school, with as much regularity as the same sagacious quadruped would have displayed in carrying his master's glove, or fetching a stick out of the water. How I should like to see a portrait of that fair demure elegant child, with her full short frock, her frilled trousers, and her blue kid shoes, threading her way, by the aid of her sable attendant, through the many small impediments of the crowded streets of Oxford!

Or the pretty scene of childish distress which I saw last winter on my way to East Court,—a distress which told its own story as completely as the picture of the broken pitcher! Driving rapidly along the beautiful road from Eversley Bridge to Finchamstead, up hill and down; on the one side a wide shelving bank, dotted with fine old oaks and beeches, intermingled with thorn and birch, and magnificent holly, and edging into Mr. Palmer's forest-like woods; on the other, an open hilly country, studded with large single trees. In the midst of this landscape, rich and lovely even in winter, in the very middle of the road, stood two poor cottage children, a year or two younger than the damsel of Oxford; a large basket dangling from the hand of one of them, and a heap of barley-meal—the barley-meal that should have been in the basket — the week's dinner of the pig, scattered in the dirt at their feet. Poor little dears, how they cried! They could not have told their story, had not their story told itself;—they had been carrying the basket between them, and somehow it had slipped. A shilling remedied that disaster, and sent away all parties smiling and content.

Then again, this very afternoon, the squabbles of those ragged urchins at cricket on the common—a disputed point of *out* or *not out?* The eight-year-old boy who will not leave his wicket; the seven and nine-year-old imps who are trying to force him from his post; the wrangling partisans of all ages, from ten downwards, the two contending *sides*, who are brawling for victory; the grave, ragged umpire, a lad of twelve, with a stick under his arm, who is solemnly listening to the cause; and the younger and less interested spectators, some just breeched, and others still condemned to the ignominious petticoat, who are sitting on the bank, and wondering which party will carry the day!

What can be prettier than this, unless it be the fellow-group of girls—sisters, I presume, to the boys—who are laughing and screaming round the great oak; then darting to and fro, in a game compounded of hide-and-seek and base-ball. Now tossing the ball high, high amidst the branches; now flinging it low along the common, bowling as it were, almost within reach of the cricketers; now pursuing, now retreating, running, jumping, shouting, bawling — almost shrieking with ecstasy; whilst one sunburnt black-eyed gipsy throws forth her laughing face from behind the trunk of the old oak, and then flings a newer and a gayer ball—fortunate purchase of some hoarded sixpence — amongst her admiring playmates. Happy, happy children! that one hour of innocent enjoyment is worth an age!

It was, perhaps, my love of picturesque children that first attracted my attention towards a little maiden of some six or seven years old, whom I used to meet, sometimes going to school, and sometimes returning from it, during a casual residence of a week or two some fifteen years ago in our good town of Belford. It was a very complete specimen of childish beauty; what would be called a picture of a child, — the very study for a painter; with the round, fair, rosy face, coloured like the apple-blossom; the large, bright, open blue eyes; the broad white forehead, shaded by brown clustering curls, and the lips scarlet as winter berries. But it was the expression of that blooming countenance which formed its principal charm; every look was a smile, and a smile which had in it as much of sweetness as of gaiety. She seemed, and she was, the happiest and the most affectionate of created beings. Her dress was singularly becoming. A little straw bonnet, of a shape calculated not to conceal, but to display the young pretty face, and a full short frock of gentianella blue, which served, by its brilliant yet contrasted colouring, to enhance the brightness of that brightest complexion. Tripping along to school with her neat covered basket in her chubby hand, the little lass was perfect.

I could not help looking and admiring, and stopping to look; and the pretty child stopped too, and dropped her little curtsy; and then I spoke, and then she spoke;—for she was too innocent, too unfearing, too modest to be shy; so that Susy and I soon became acquainted; and in a very few days the acquaintanceship was extended to a fine open-countenanced man, and a sweet-looking and intelligent young woman, Susan's father and mother,—one or other of whom used to come almost every evening to meet their darling on her return from school; for she was an only one,—the sole offspring of a marriage of love, which was, I believe, reckoned unfortunate by every body except the parties concerned: they felt and knew that they were happy.

I soon learnt their simple history. William Jervis, the only son of a rich carpenter, had been attached, almost from childhood, to his fair neighbour, Mary Price, the daughter of a

haberdasher in a great way of business, who lived in the same street. The carpenter, a plodding, frugal artisan of the old school, who trusted to indefatigable industry and undeviating sobriety for getting on in life, had an instinctive mistrust of the more dashing and speculative tradesman, and, even in the height of his prosperity, looked with cold and doubtful eyes on his son's engagement. Mr. Price's circumstances, however, seemed, and at the time were, so flourishing—his offers so liberal, and his daughter's character so excellent, that to refuse his consent would have been an unwarrantable stretch of authority. All that our prudent carpenter could do was, to delay the union, in hopes that something might still occur to break it off; and when ten days before the time finally fixed for the marriage, the result of an unsuccessful speculation placed Mr. Price's name in the Gazette, most heartily did he congratulate himself on the foresight which, as he hoped, had saved him from the calamity of a portionless daughter-in-law. He had, however, miscalculated the strength of his son's affection for poor Mary, as well as the firm principle of honour, which regarded their long and every-way sanctioned engagement as a bond little less sacred than wedlock itself; and on Mr. Price's dying, within a very few months, of that death which, although not included in the bills of mortality, is yet but too truly recognised by the popular phrase, a broken heart, William Jervis, after vainly trying every mode of appeal to his obdurate father, married the orphan girl —in the desperate hope that, the step being once taken, and past all remedy, an only child would find forgiveness for an offence attended by so many extenuating circumstances.

But here, too, William, in his turn, miscalculated the invincible obstinacy of his father's character. He ordered his son from his house and his presence, dismissed him from his employment, forbade his very name to be mentioned in his hearing, and, up to the time at which our story begins, comported himself exactly as if he never had had a child.

William, a dutiful, affectionate son, felt severely the deprivation of his father's affection, and Mary felt for her William; but, so far as regarded their worldly concerns, I am almost afraid to say how little they regretted their change of prospects. Young, healthy, active, wrapt up in each other and in their lovely little girl, they found small difficulty and no hardship in earning—he by his trade, at which he was so good a workman as always to command high wages, and she by needle-work—sufficient to supply their humble wants; and when the kindness of Walter Price, Mary's brother, who had again opened a shop in the town, enabled them to send their little Susy to a school of a better order than their own funds would have permitted, their utmost ambition seemed gratified.

So far was speedily made known to me. I discovered also that Mrs. Jervis possessed, in a remarkable degree, the rare quality called taste—a faculty which does really appear to be almost intuitive in some minds, let metaphysicians laugh as they may; and the ladies of Belford, delighted to find an opportunity of at once exercising their benevolence, and procuring exquisitely fancied caps and bonnets at half the cost which they had been accustomed to pay to the fine yet vulgar milliner, who had hitherto ruled despotically over the fashions of the place, did not fail to rescue their new and interesting protegée from the drudgery of sewing white seam, and of poring over stitching and button-holes.

For some years all prospered in their little household. Susy grew in stature and in beauty, retaining the same look of intelligence and sweetness which had, in her early childhood, fascinated all beholders. She ran some risk of being spoiled, (only that, luckily, she was of the grateful, unselfish, affectionate nature which seems unspoilable,) by the admiration of Mrs. Jervis's customers, who, whenever she took home their work, would send for the pretty Susan into the parlour, and give her fruit and sweetmeats, or whatever cakes might be likely to please a childish appetite; which it was observed, she contrived, whenever she could do so without offence, to carry home to her mother, whose health, always delicate, had lately appeared more than usually precarious. Even her stern grandfather, now become a master-builder, and one of the richest tradesmen in the town, had been remarked to look long and wistfully on the lovely little girl, as, holding by her father's hand, she tripped lightly to church, although, on that father himself, he never deigned to cast a glance; so that the more acute denizens of Belford used to prognosticate that, although William was disinherited, Mr. Jervis's property would not go out of the family.

So matters continued awhile. Susan was eleven years old, when a stunning and unexpected blow fell upon them all. Walter Price, her kind uncle, who had hitherto seemed as prudent as he was prosperous, became involved in the stoppage of a great Glasgow house, and was obliged to leave the town; whilst her father, having unfortunately accepted bills drawn by him, under an assurance that they should be provided for long before they became due, was thrown into prison for the amount. There was, indeed, a distant hope that the affairs of the Glasgow house might come round, or, at least, that Walter Price's concerns might be disentangled from theirs; and for this purpose, his presence, as a man full of activity and intelligence, was absolutely necessary in Scotland; but this prospect was precarious and distant. In the mean time, William Jervis lay lingering in prison, his creditor relying avowedly on the

chance that a rich father could not, for shame, allow his son to perish there; whilst Mary, sick, helpless, and desolate, was too broken-spirited to venture an application to a quarter, from whence any slight hope that she might otherwise have entertained was entirely banished by the recollection that the penalty had been incurred through a relation of her own.

"Why should I go to him?" said poor Mary to herself, when referred by Mr. Barnard, her husband's creditor, to her wealthy father-in-law,—"why trouble him? He will never pay my brother's debt: he would only turn me from his door, and, perhaps, speak of Walter and William in a way that would break my heart." And, with her little daughter in her hand, she walked slowly back to a small room that she had hired near the jail, and sat down sadly and heavily to the daily diminishing millinery work, which was now the only resource of the once happy family.

In the afternoon of the same day, as old Mr. Jervis was seated in a little summer-house at the end of his neat garden, gravely smoking his pipe over a tumbler of spirits and water, defiling the delicious odour of his honey-suckles and sweetbriers by the two most atrocious smells on this earth — the fumes of tobacco * and of gin — his meditations, probably none of the most agreeable, were interrupted, first by a modest single knock at the front door, (which, the intermediate doors being open, he heard distinctly,) then by a gentle parley, and, lastly, by his old housekeeper's advance up the gravel-walk, followed by a very young girl, who approached him hastily yet tremblingly, caught his rough hand with her little one, lifted up a sweet face, where smiles seemed breaking through her tears, and, in an attitude between standing and kneeling—an attitude of deep reverence—faltered, in a low, broken voice, one low, broken word,—"Grandfather!"

"How came this child here?" exclaimed Mr. Jervis, endeavouring to disengage the hand which Susan had now secured within both hers—"how dared you let her in, Norris, when you knew my orders respecting the whole family?"

"How dared I let her in?" returned the housekeeper—"how could I help it? Don't we all know that there is not a single house in the town where little Susan (Heaven bless her dear face!) is not welcome! Don't the very jailers themselves let her into the prison before hours and after hours? And don't the sheriff himself, as strict as he is said to be, sanction it? Speak to your grandfather, Susy, love — don't be dashed."† And, with this encouraging exhortation, the kind housekeeper retired.

Susan continued clasping her grandfather's hand, and leaning her face over it, as if to conceal the tears which poured down her cheeks like rain.

"What do you want with me, child?" at length interrupted Mr. Jervis, in a stern voice. "What brought you here?"

"Oh, grandfather! Poor father's in prison!"

"I did not put him there," observed Mr. Jervis, coldly; "you must go to Mr. Barnard on that affair."

"Mother did go to him this morning," replied Susan, "and he told her that she must apply to you——"

"Well!" exclaimed the grandfather, impatiently.

"But she said she dared not, angry as you were with her—more especially as it is through uncle Walter's misfortune that all this misery has happened. Mother dared not come to you."

"She was right enough there," returned Mr. Jervis. "So she sent you?"

"No, indeed; she knows nothing of my coming. She sent me to carry home a cap to Mrs. Taylor, who lives in the next street, and, as I was passing the door, it came into my head to knock—and then Mrs. Norris brought me here—Oh, grandfather! I hope I have not done wrong! I hope you are not angry!—But if you were to see how sad and pale poor father looks in that dismal prison—and poor mother how sick and ill she is; how her hand trembles when she tries to work—Oh, grandfather! if you could but see them, you would not wonder at my boldness."

"All this comes of trusting to a speculating knave like Walter Price!" observed Mr. Jervis, rather as a soliloquy than to the child, who, however, heard and replied to the remark.

"He was very kind to me, was uncle Walter! He put me to school, to learn reading, and writing, and ciphering, and all sorts of needle-work—not a charity-school, because he wished me to be amongst decent children, and not to learn bad ways. And he has written to offer to come to prison himself, if father wishes it — only — I don't understand about business—but even Mr. Barnard says that the best chance of recovering the money is his remaining at liberty; and, indeed, indeed, grandfather, my uncle Walter is not so wicked as you think for—indeed he is not."

"This child is grateful!" was the thought that passed through her grandfather's mind; but he did not give it utterance. He, how-

* Whenever one thinks of Sir Walter Raleigh as the importer of this disgusting and noisome weed, it tends greatly to mitigate the horror which one feels for his unjust execution. Had he been only beheaded as the inventor of smoking, all would have been right.

† *Dashed* — frightened. I believe this expression, though frequently used there, is not confined to Berkshire. It is one of the pretty provincial phrases by which Richardson has contrived to give a charming rustic grace to the early letters of Pamela.

ever, drew her closer to him, and seated her in the summer-house at his side. "So you can read and write, and keep accounts, and do all sorts of needle-work, can you, my little maid? And you can run of errands, doubtless, and are handy about a house? Should you like to live with me and Norris, and make my shirts, and read the newspaper to me of an evening, and learn to make puddings and pies, and be my own little Susan? Eh! —Should you like this?"

"Oh, grandfather!" exclaimed Susan, enchanted.

"And water the flowers," pursued Mr. Jervis, "and root out the weeds, and gather the beau-pots? Is not this a nice garden, Susy?"

"Oh, beautiful! dear grandfather, beautiful!"

"And would you like to live with me in this pretty house and this beautiful garden—should you, Susy?"

"Oh, yes, dear grandfather!"

"And never wish to leave me?"

"Oh, never! never!"

"Nor to see the dismal jail again—the dismal, dreary jail?"

"Never!—but father is to live here too?" inquired Susan, interrupting herself—"father and mother?"

"No!" replied her grandfather—"neither of them. It was you whom I asked to live here with me. I have nothing to do with them, and you must choose between us."

"They not live here! I to leave my father and my mother—my own dear mother, and she so sick! my own dear father, and he in a jail! Oh, grandfather! you cannot mean it —you cannot be so cruel!"

"There is no cruelty in the matter, Susan. I give you the offer of leaving your parents, and living with me; but I do not compel you to accept it. You are an intelligent little girl, and perfectly capable of choosing for yourself. But I beg you to take notice that, by remaining with them, you will not only share, but increase their poverty; whereas, with me, you will not only enjoy every comfort yourself, but relieve them from the burden of your support."

"It is not a burden," replied Susan, firmly; —"I know that, young and weak, and ignorant as I am now, I am yet of some use to my dear mother—and of some comfort to my dear father; and every day I shall grow older and stronger, and more able to be a help to them both. And to leave them! to live here in plenty, whilst they were starving! to be gathering posies, whilst they were in prison! Oh, grandfather! I should die of the very thought. Thank you for your offer," continued she, rising, and dropping her little curtsy—"but my choice is made. Good evening, grandfather!"

"Don't be in such a hurry, Susy," rejoined her grandfather, shaking the ashes from his pipe, taking the last sip of his gin and water, and then proceeding to adjust his hat and wig —"Don't be in such a hurry: you and I shan't part so easily. You're a dear little girl, and since you won't stay with me, I must e'en go with you. The father and mother who brought up such a child, must be worth bringing home. So, with your good leave, Miss Susan, we'll go and fetch them."

And, in the midst of Susy's rapturous thanks, her kisses and her tears, out they sallied: and the money was paid, and the debtor released, and established with his overjoyed wife in the best room of Mr. Jervis's pretty habitation, to the unspeakable gratitude of the whole party, and the ecstatic delight of the Carpenter's Daughter.

SUPPERS AND BALLS;

OR, TOWN VERSUS COUNTRY.

Thirty years ago Belford was a remarkably sociable place, just of the right size for pleasant visiting. In very small towns people see each other too closely, and fall almost unconsciously into the habit of prying and peeping into their neighbours' concerns, and gossiping and tittle-tattling, and squabbling, and jostling, as if the world were not wide enough for them; and such is the fact—their world is too narrow. In very great towns, on the other hand, folks see too little of one another, and do not care a straw for their near dwellers. Large provincial towns, the overgrown capitals of overgrown counties, are almost as bad in that respect as London, where next-door neighbours may come into the world, or go out of it—be born, or married, or buried, without one's hearing a word of the birth, or the wedding, or the funeral, until one reads the intelligence, two or three days afterwards, in the newspapers.

Now in Belford, thirty years ago, whilst you were perfectly secure from any such cold and chilling indifference to your well or ill being, so you might reckon on being tolerably free from the more annoying impertinence of a minute and scrutinizing curiosity. The place was too large for the one evil, and too small for the other: almost every family of the class commonly called genteel, visited and was visited by the rest of their order; and not being a manufacturing town, and the trade, although flourishing, being limited to the supply of the inhabitants, and of the wealthy and populous neighbourhood, the distinction was more easily drawn than is usual in this commercial country; and the gentry of Belford might be comprised in the members of the three learned professions, the principal partners in the banks, one or two of the most thriving brewers, and that numerous body of

idle persons who live upon their means, and whom the political economists are pleased, somewhat uncivilly, to denominate "the unproductive classes."

Another favourable circumstance in the then state of the Belford society, was the circumstance of nobody's being over-rich. Some had, to be sure, larger incomes than others; but there was no great monied man, no borough Crœsus, to look down upon his poorer neighbours, and insult them by upstart pride or pompous condescension. All met upon the table-land of gentility, and the few who were more affluent contrived, almost without exception, to disarm envy by using their greater power for the gracious purpose of diffusing pleasure and promoting sociability. And certainly a more sociable set of people could not easily have been found.

To say nothing at present of the professional gentlemen, or of that exceedingly preponderating part of the female "interest" (to borrow another cant phrase of the day,) the widows and single ladies, the genteel inhabitants of Belford were as diversified as heart could desire. We had two naval captains: the one, a bold, dashing, open-hearted tar, who after remaining two or three years unemployed, fuming, and chafing, and grumbling over his want of interest, got a ship, and died, after a brilliant career, at the summit of fame and fortune; the other, a steady, business-like person, who did his duty as an English sailor always does, but who, wanting the art of making opportunities, the uncalculating bravery, the happy rashness, which seems essential to that branch of the service, lived obscurely, and died neglected. His wife had in her temperament the fire that her husband wanted. She was a virago, and would, beyond all doubt, have thought nothing of encountering a whole fleet, whether friends or foes; whilst Sir Charles's lady (for our gallant officer had already won that distinction) was a poor, shrinking, delicate, weak-spirited little woman, who would have fainted at the sound of a signal-gun, and have died of a royal salute. They were great acquisitions to the society, especially Sir Charles, who, though he would have preferred a battle every day, had no objection, in default of that diversion, to a party of any sort,—dance, supper, dinner, rout, nothing came amiss to him, although it must be confessed that he liked the noisest best.

Then arrived a young Irish gentleman, who having run away with an heiress, and spent as much of her fortune as the Court of Chancery would permit, came to Belford to retrench, and to wait for a place, which, through some exceedingly indirect and remote channel of interest, he expected to procure, and for which he pretended to prepare, and doubtless thought that he was preparing himself by the study of Cocker's Arithmetic. *He* study Cocker! Oh, dear me! all that he was ever likely to know of pounds, shillings, and pence, was the art of spending them, in which he was a proficient. A gay, agreeable, thoughtless creature he was, and so was his pretty wife. They had married so young, that whilst still looking like boy and girl, a tribe of boys and girls were rising round them, all alike gay and kind, and merry and thoughtless. They were the very persons to promote parties, since without them they could not live.

Then came a Scotch colonel in the Company's service, with an elegant wife and a pretty daughter. A mighty man for dinnering and suppering was he! I question if Ude be a better cook. I am quite sure that he does not think so much of his own talents in that way as our colonel did. He never heard of a turtle within twenty miles, but he offered to dress it, and once nearly broke his neck in descending into a subterranean kitchen to superintend the haunches at a mayor's feast. An excellent person was he, and a jovial, and a perfect gentleman even in his white apron.

Then came two graver pairs: a young clergyman, who had married a rich and very charming widow, and seemed to think it right to appear staid and demure to conceal the half-a-dozen years by which she had the disadvantage of him; and a widow and her son, a young man just from college, and intended for the diplomatic line, for which, if to be silent, solemn, safe, and dull, be a recommendation, he was very eminently gifted.

Then we had my friend the talking gentleman and his pretty wife; then a half-pay major, very prosy; then a retired commissary, very dozy; then a papa with three daughters; then a mamma with two sons; then a family too large to count; and then some score of respectable and agreeable ladies and gentlemen, the chorus of the opera, the figurantes of the ballet, who may fairly be summed up in one general eulogy as very good sort of people in their way.

This *catalogue raisonné* of the Belford gentlefolks does not sound very grand or very intellectual, or very much to boast about; but yet the component parts, the elements of society, mingled well together, and the result was almost as pleasant as the colonel's inimitable punch—sweet and spirited, with a little acid, and not too much water—or as Sir Charles's champagne, sparkling and effervescent, and completely *up* as his own brilliant spirits and animated character. I was a girl at the time—a very young girl, and, what is more to the purpose, a very shy one, so that I mixed in none of the gaieties; but, speaking from observation and recollection, I can fairly say that I never saw any society more innocently cheerful, or more completely free from any other restraints than those of good breeding and propriety. The gentlemen had frequent dinner-parties, and the young people occasional dances at such houses where the

rooms were large enough; but the pleasantest meetings were social suppers, preceded by a quiet rubber, and a noisy round game, succeeded by one or two national airs, very sweetly sung by the Irishman's wife and the colonel's daughter, enlivened by comic songs by the talking gentleman—a genius in that line, and interspersed with more of fun and jest, and jollity of jokes that nobody could explain, and of laughter no one knew why, than I ever have happened to witness amongst any assemblage of well-behaved and well-educated people. One does sometimes meet with enjoyment amongst a set of country lads and lasses; but to see ladies and gentlemen merry as well as wise, is, in these utilitarian days, somewhat uncommon.

N. B. If I were asked whether this happy state of things still continues, I should find the question difficult to answer. Belford is thirty years older since the joyous Christmas holidays which have left so pleasant an impression on my memory, and more than thirty years larger, since it has increased and multiplied, not after the staid and sober fashion of an English country town, but in the ratio of an American city—Cincinnati for instance, or any other settlement of the West, which was the wilderness yesterday, and starts into a metropolis to-morrow. Moreover, I doubt if the habits of the middle ranks in England be as sociable now as they were then. The manners immortalized by Miss Austen are rapidly passing away. There is more of finery, more of literature, more of accomplishment, and, above all, more of pretension, than there used to be. Scandal vanished with the tea-table; gossiping is out of fashion; jokes are gone by; conversation is critical, analytical, political—any thing but personal. The world is a wise world, and a learned world, and a scientific world; but not half so merry a world as it was thirty years ago. And then, courteous reader, I too am thirty years older, which must be taken into the account; for if those very supper-parties, those identical Christmas holidays, which I enjoyed so much at fourteen, were to return again bodily, with all their "quips and cranks, and jollity," it is just a thousand to one but they found the woman of forty-four too grave for them, and longing for the quiet and decorum of the elegant *conversazione* and select dinners of 1834: of such contradictions is this human nature of ours mingled and composed!

To return once more to Belford, as I remember it at bonny fifteen.

The public amusements of the town were sober enough. Ten years before, clubs had flourished; and the heads of houses had met once a week at the King's Arms for the purpose of whist-playing; whilst the ladies, thus deserted by their liege lords, had established a meeting at each other's mansions on club-nights, from which, by way of retaliation, the whole male sex was banished except Mr. Singleton. At the time, however, of which I speak, these clubs had passed away; and the public diversions were limited to an annual visit from a respectable company of actors, the theatre being, as is usual in country places, very well conducted and exceedingly ill attended; to biennial concerts, equally good in their kind, and rather better patronised; and to almost weekly incursions from itinerant lecturers on all the arts and sciences, and from prodigies of every kind, whether three-year old fiddlers or learned dogs.

There were also balls in their spacious and commodious town-hall, which seemed as much built for the purposes of dancing as for that of trying criminals. Public balls there were in abundance; but at the time of which I speak they were of less advantage to the good town of Belford than any one, looking at the number of good houses and of pretty young women, could well have thought possible. Never was a place in which the strange prejudice, the invisible but strongly felt line of demarcation, which all through England divides the county families from the townspeople, was more rigidly sustained. To live in that respectable borough was in general a recognised exclusion from the society of the neighbourhood; and if by chance any one so high in wealth, or station, or talent, or connexion, as to set the proscription at defiance, happened to settle within the obnoxious walls, why then the country circle took possession of the new-comer, and he was, although living in the very heart of the borough, claimed and considered as a country family, and seized by the county and relinquished by the town accordingly.* The thing is too absurd to reason upon; but so it was, and so to a great degree it still continues all over England.

A public ball-room is, perhaps, of all others, the scene where this feeling is most certain to display itself; and the Belford balls had, from time immemorial, been an arena where the conflicting vanities of the town and county belles came into collision. A circumstance that had happened some twenty years before the time of which I write (that is to say, nearly fifty years ago) had, however, ended in the total banishment of the Belford beauties from the field of battle.

Every body remembers the attack made upon George III. by an unfortunate mad woman, of the name of Margaret Nicholson; the quantity of addresses sent up in consequence, from all parts of the kingdom, and the number

* They order matters rather better now; at least, I know some three or four very delightful persons who, although guilty of living amongst streets and brick walls, do yet visit in town or country as they see fit; and the ball-room distinction is, I believe, partly swept away—but not quite.

of foolish persons who accompanied the deputations and accepted the honour of knighthood on the occasion. Amongst these simple personages were two aldermen of Belford, a brewer and a banker, whose daughters, emulous of their fathers' wisdom, were rash enough, at the next monthly assembly, to take place above the daughters of the high sheriff, and the county members, and half the landed gentry of the neighbourhood. The young country ladies behaved with great discretion; they put a stop to the remonstrances of their partners, walked in a mass to the other end of the room, formed their own set there, and left the daughters of the new-made knights to go down the dance by themselves. But the result was the establishment of subscription balls, under the direction of a county committee, and a complete exclusion, for the time, at least, of the female inhabitants of Belford.

By some means or other, the gentlemen contrived to creep in as partners, though not much to their own comfort or advantage. The county balls at Belford were amongst the scenes of King Harwood's most notable disappointments; and a story was in circulation (for the truth of which, however, I will not venture to vouch) that our young diplomatist, who, from the day he first entered Oxford to that in which he left it, had been a tuft-hunter by profession, was actually so deceived, by her being on a visit to a noble family in the neighbourhood, as to request the hand of a young lady for the first two dances, who turned out to be nothing better than the sister of the curate of his own parish, who came the very next week to keep her brother's house, a house of six rooms little better than closets, in Belford, who had not the apology of beauty, and whose surname was Brown!

It follows, from this state of things, that, in tracing the annals of beauty in the Belford ball-room, in our subsequent pages, our portraits must be chiefly drawn from the young ladies of the neighbourhood, the fair damsels of the town (for of many a fair damsel the town could boast) having been driven to other scenes for the display of their attractions. I am not sure that they lost many admirers by the exclusion; for a pretty girl is a pretty girl, even if she chance to live amongst houses and brick walls, instead of trees and green fields, —and, somehow or other, young men will make the discovery. And a pair of bright eyes will do as much execution at a concert, or a lecture, or a horticultural show, or even —with all reverence be it spoken—at a missionary meeting, as if threading the mazes of the old-fashioned country dance, or *dos-à-dos*ing in the most fashionable quadrille. Nothing breaks down artificial distinctions so certainly as beauty; and so, or I mistake, our Belford lasses have found.

THE OLD EMIGRE.

The town of Belford is, like many of our ancient English boroughs, full of monastic remains, which give an air at once venerable and picturesque to the irregular streets and suburban gardens of the place. Besides the great ruins of the abbey extending over many acres, and the deep and beautiful arched gateway forming part of an old romantic house, which, although erected many centuries later, is now falling to decay, whilst the massive structure of the arch remains firm and vigorous as a rock,* —besides that graceful and shadowy gateway which, with the majestic elms that front it, has formed the subject of almost as many paintings and drawings as Durham Cathedral—besides these venerable remains, every corner of the town presents some relic of "hoar antiquity" to the eye of the curious traveller. Here, a stack of chimneys,—there, a bit of garden wall,—in this place, a stone porch with the date 1472,—in that, an oaken-raftered granary of still earlier erection—all give token of the solid architecture of the days when the mitred abbots of the great monastery of Belford, where princes have lodged and kings been buried, (as witness the stone coffins not long since disinterred in the ruined chapel,) were the munificent patrons and absolute suzerains of the good burghers and their borough town. Even where no such traces exist, the very names of the different localities indicate their connexion with these powerful Benedictines. Friar Street, Minster Street, the Oriel, the Holy Brook, the Abbey Mills,—names which have long outlived, not only the individual monks, but even the proud foundation by which they were bestowed,—still attest the extensive influence of the lord abbot. If it be true, according to Lord Byron, that "words are things," still more truly may we say, that names are histories.

Nor were these remains confined to the town. The granges and parks belonging to the wide-spreading abbey lands, their manors and fisheries, extended for many miles around; and more than one yeoman, in the remoter villages, claims to be descended of the tenants who held farms under the church; whilst many a mouldering parchment indicates the assumption of the abbey property by the crown, or its bestowal on some favourite noble of the court. And, amidst these relics of ecclesiastical pomp and wealth, be it not forgotten, that better things were mingled,—almshouses for the old, hospitals for the sick, and crosses and chapels at which the pilgrim or the way-

* It was not, I believe, at this gateway, but at one the very remains of which are now swept away, that the abbot and two of his monks were hanged at the time of the Reformation: a most causeless piece of cruelty, since no resistance was offered by the helpless Benedictines.

farer might offer up his prayers. One of the latter, dedicated to "Our Ladye," was singularly situated on the centre pier of the old bridge at Upton, where, indeed, the original basement, surmounted by a more modern dwelling-house, still continues.

By far the most beautiful ruin in Belford is, however, the east end of an old Friary, situate at the entrance of the town from the pleasant village of Upton above-mentioned, from which it is divided by about half a mile of green meadows sloping down to the great river, with its long straggling bridge, sliding, as it were, into an irregular street of cottages, trees, and gardens, terminated by the old church, embosomed in wood, and crowned by the great chalk-pit, and the high range of Oxfordshire hills.

The end of the old Friary forming the angle between two of the streets of Belford, and being, itself, the last building of the town, commands this pretty pastoral prospect. It is placed in about half an acre of ground, partly cultivated as a garden, partly planted with old orchard trees, standing back from the street on the one side, and the road on the other, apart and divided from every meaner building, except a small white cottage, which is erected against the lower part, and which it surmounts in all the pride of its venerable beauty, retaining almost exactly that form of a pointed arch, to which the groined roof was fitted; almost, but not quite, since, on one side, part of the stones are crumbling away into a picturesque irregularity, whilst the other is overgrown by large masses of ivy, and the snapdragon and the wallflower have contributed to break the outline. The east window, however, is perfect—as perfect as if finished yesterday. And the delicate tracery of that window, the rich fretwork of its Gothic carving, clear as point-lace, regular as the quaint cutting of an Indian fan, have to me—especially when the summer sky is seen through those fantastic mouldings, and the ash and elder saplings, which have sprung from the fallen masses below, mingle their fresh and vivid tints with the hoary apple trees of the orchard, and the fine mellow hue of the weather-stained grey stone — a truer combination of that which the mind seeks in ruins, the union of the beautiful and the sad, than any similar scene with which I am acquainted, however aided by silence and solitude, by majestic woods and mighty waters.

Perhaps, the very absence of these romantic adjuncts, the passing at once from the busy hum of men to this memorial of past generations, may aid the impression; or, perhaps, the associations connected with the small cottage that leans against it, and harmonizes so well in form, and colour, and feeling, with the general picture, may have more influence than can belong merely to form and colour in producing the half-unconscious melancholy that steals over the thoughts.

Nothing could be less melancholy than my first recollections of that dwelling, when, a happy school-girl at home for the holidays, I used to open the small wicket, and run up the garden-path, and enter the ever-open door to purchase Mrs. Duval's famous brioches and marangles.

Mrs. Duval had not always lived in the cottage by the Friary. Fifteen years before, she had been a trim black-eyed maiden, the only daughter and heiress of old Anthony Richards, an eminent confectioner in Queen Street. There she had presided over turtle-soup and tartlets, ices and jellies — in short, over the whole business of the counter, with much discretion, her mother being dead, and Anthony keeping close to his territory—the oven. With admirable discretion had Miss Fanny Richards conducted the business of the shop; smiling, civil, and attentive to every body, and yet contriving,—in spite of her gay and pleasant manner, the evident light-heartedness which danced in her sparkling eyes, and her airy steps, and her arch yet innocent speech, a light-heartedness which charmed even the gravest—to avoid any the slightest approach to allurement or coquetry. The most practised recruiting officer that ever lounged in a country town could not strike up a flirtation with Fanny Richards; nor could the more genuine admiration of the raw boy just come from Eton and not yet gone to Oxford, extort the slenderest encouragement from the prudent and right-minded maiden. She returned their presents and laughed at their poetry, and had raised for herself such a reputation for civility and propriety, that, when the French man-cook of a neighbouring nobleman, an *artiste* of the first water, made his proposals, and her good father, after a little John Bullish demur, on the score of language and country, was won, imitating the example related of some of the old painters to bestow on him his daughter's hand, in reward of the consummate skill of his productions, (a magnificent *Pâté de Périgord* is said to have been the *chef-d'œuvre* which gained the fair prize,) not a family in the town or neighbourhood but wished well to the young nymph of the counter, and resolved to do every thing that their protection and patronage could compass for her advantage and comfort.

The excellent character and excellent confectionary of the adroit and agreeable Frenchman completely justified Fanny's choice; and her fond father, from the hour that he chucklingly iced her wedding-cake, and changed his old, homely, black and white inscription of "Anthony Richards, pastry-cook," which had whilom modestly surmounted the shop-window, into a very grand and very illegible scroll, gold on a blue ground, in the old English character, (*Arabesque* the bridegroom called

it; indeed, if it had been Arabic, it could hardly have been more unintelligible,) of "Anthony Richards and Louis Duval, man-cooks and restorers," which required the contents of the aforesaid window to explain its meaning to English eyes,—from that triumphant hour to the time of his death, some three years afterwards, never once saw cause to repent that he had intrusted his daughter's fortune and happiness to a foreigner. So completely was his prejudice surmounted, that, when a boy was born, and it was proposed to give him the name of his grandfather, the old man positively refused. "Let him be such another Louis Duval as you have been," said he, "and I shall be satisfied."

All prospered in Queen-street, and all deserved to prosper. From the noblemen and gentlemen, at whose houses, on days of high festival, Louis Duval officiated as *chef de cuisine*, down to the urchins of the street, halfpenny customers whose object it was to get most sweets for their money, all agreed that the cookery and the cakery, the soufflés and the buns, were inimitable. Perhaps the ready and smiling civility, the free and genuine kindness, which looked out and weighed a pennyworth of sugar-plums with an attention as real and as good-natured as that with which an order was taken for a winter dessert, had something to do with this universal popularity. Be that as it may, all prospered, and all deserved to prosper, in Queen-street; and, until the old man died, it would have been difficult, in the town or the country, to fix on a more united, or a happier family. That event, by bringing an accession of property and power to Louis Duval, introduced into his mind a spirit of speculation, an ambition, (if one may apply so grand a word to the projects of a confectioner,) which became as fatal to his fortunes as it has often proved to those of greater men. He became weary of his paltry profits and his provincial success—weary even of the want of competition,—for poor old Mrs. Thomas, the pastry-cook in the market-place, an inert and lumpish personage of astounding dimensions, whose fame, such it was, rested on huge plum-cakes almost as big round as herself, and little better than bread with a few currants interspersed, wherewith, under the plea of wholesomeness, poor children were crammed at school and at home,—poor old Mrs. Thomas could never be regarded as his rival;—these motives, together with the wish to try a wider field, and an unlucky suggestion from his old master, the Earl, that he and his wife would be the very persons for a London hotel, induced him to call in his debts, dispose of his house and business in Queen-street, embark in a large concern in the West-end, and leave Belford altogether.

The result of this measure may be easily anticipated. Wholly unaccustomed to London, and to that very nice and difficult undertaking, a great hotel,—and with a capital which, though considerable in itself, was yet inadequate to a speculation of such magnitude,—poor Monsieur and Madame Duval (for they had assumed all the Frenchifications possible on setting up in the great city) were tricked, and cheated, and laughed at by her countrymen and by his, and in the course of four years were completely ruined; whilst he, who might always have procured a decent livelihood by going about to different houses as a professor of the culinary art, (for though Louis had lost every thing else, he had not, as he used to observe, and it was a comfort to him, poor fellow! lost his professional reputation,) caught cold by overheating himself in cooking a great dinner, fell into a consumption, and died; leaving his young wife and her little boy friendless and penniless in the wide world.

Under these miserable circumstances, poor Fanny naturally returned to her native town, with some expectation, perhaps, that the patrons and acquaintances of her father and her husband might re-establish her in her old business, for which, having been brought up in the trade, and having retained all the receipts which had made their shop so celebrated, she was peculiarly qualified. But, although surrounded by well-wishers and persons ready to assist her to a certain small extent, Mrs. Duval soon found how difficult it is for any one, especially a woman, to obtain money without security, and without any certainty of repayment. That she had failed once, was reason enough to render people fearful that she might fail again. Besides, her old rival, Mrs. Thomas, was also dead, and had been succeeded by a Quaker couple, so alert, so intelligent, so accurately and delicately clean in all their looks, and ways, and wares, that the very sight of their bright counter, and its simple but tempting cates, gave their customers an appetite. They were the fashion, too, unluckily. Nothing could go down for luncheon in any family of gentility, but Mrs. Purdy's biscuits; and poor Mrs. Duval found her more various and richer confectionary comparatively disregarded. The most that her friends could do for her was to place her in the Friary Cottage, where, besides carrying on a small trade with the few old customers who still adhered to herself and her tartlets, she could have the advantage of letting a small bed-chamber and a pleasant little parlour to any lodger desirous of uniting good air, and a close vicinity to a large town, with a situation peculiarly secluded and romantic.

The first occupant of Mrs. Duval's pleasant apartments was a Catholic priest, an *émigré*, to whom they had a double recommendation, in his hostess's knowledge of the French language, of French habits, and French cookery, (she being, as he used to affirm, the only

Englishwoman that ever made drinkable coffee,) and in the old associations of the precincts ("piece of a cloister") around which the venerable memorials of the ancient faith still lingered even in decay. He might have said, with Antonio, in one of the finest scenes ever conceived by a poet's imagination, that in which the Echo answers from the murdered woman's grave,—

"I do love these ancient ruins;
We never tread upon them but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history;
And, questionless, here in this open court
(Which now lies open to the injuries
Of stormy weather) some do lie interr'd,
Loved the church so well, and gave so largely to 't,
They thought it should have canopied their bones
Till doomsday: but all things have their end:
Churches and cities (which have diseases like to men)
Must have like death that we have."

WEBSTER—*Duchess of Malfy.*

If such were the inducements that first attracted M. l'Abbé Villaret, he soon found others in the pleasing manners and amiable temper of Mrs. Duval, whose cheerfulness and kindness of heart had not abandoned her in her change of fortune; and in the attaching character of her charming little boy, who—singularly tall of his age, and framed with the mixture of strength and delicacy, of pliancy and uprightness, which characterizes the ideal forms of the Greek marbles, and the reality of the human figure amongst the aborigines of North America,* and a countenance dark, sallow, and colourless, but sparkling with expression as that of the natives of the South of Europe, the eye all laughter, the smile all intelligence,—was as unlike in mind as in person to the chubby, ruddy, noisy urchins by whom he was surrounded. Quick, gentle, docile, and graceful to a point of elegance rarely seen even amongst the most carefully-educated children, he might have been placed at court as the page of a fair young queen, and have been the plaything and pet of the maids of honour. The pet of M. l'Abbé he became almost as soon as he saw him; and to that pleasant distinction was speedily added the invaluable advantage of being his pupil.

L'Abbé Villaret had been a cadet of one of the oldest families in France, destined to the church as the birthright of a younger son, but attached to his profession with a seriousness and earnestness not common amongst the gay noblesse of the *ancien régime*, who too often assumed the *petit collet* as the badge of one sort of frivolity, just as their elder brothers wielded the sword, and served a campaign or two, by way of excuse for an idleness and dissipation of a different kind. This devotion had of course been greatly increased by the persecution of the church which distinguished the commencement of the Revolution. The good Abbé had been marked as one of the earliest victims, and had escaped, through the gratitude of an old servant, from the fate which swept off sisters and brothers, and almost every individual, except himself, of a large and flourishing family. Penniless and solitary, he made his way to England, and found an asylum in the town of Belford, at first assisted by the pittance allowed by our government to those unfortunate foreigners, and subsequently supported by his own exertions as assistant to the priest of the Catholic Chapel in Belford, and as a teacher of the French language in the town and neighbourhood; and so complete had been the ravages of the Revolution in his own family, and so entirely had he established himself in the esteem of his English friends, that when the short peace of Amiens restored so many of his brother *émigrés* to their native land, he refused to quit the country of his adoption, and remained the contented inhabitant of the Friary Cottage.

The contented and most beloved inhabitant, not only of that small cottage, but of the town to which it belonged, was the good Abbé. Every body loved the kind and placid old man, whose resignation was so real and so cheerful, who had such a talent for making the best of things, whose moral alchymy could extract some good out of every evil, and who seemed only the more indulgent to the faults and follies of others because he had so little cause to require indulgence for his own. One prejudice he had—a lurking predilection in favour of good blood and long descent; the Duke de St. Simon himself would hardly have felt a stronger partiality for the Montmorencies or the Mortemars; and yet so well was this prejudice governed, so closely veiled from all offensive display, that not only *la belle et bonne bourgeoise* Madame Lane, as he used to call the excellent wife of that great radical leader, but even *le gros bourgeois son époux*, desperate whig as he was, were amongst the best friends and sincerest well-wishers of our courteous old Frenchman. He was their customer for the little meat that his economy and his appetite required; and they were his for as many French lessons as their rosy, laughing daughters could be coaxed into taking during the very short interval that elapsed between their respectively leaving school and getting married. How the Miss Lanes came to learn French at all, a piece of finery rather inconsistent with the substantial plainness of their general education, I could not comprehend, until I found that the daughters of Mrs. Green, the grocer, their opposite neighbour, between whom and dear Mrs. Lane there existed a little friendly rivalry, (for, good woman as she was, even Margaret Lane had something of the ordinary frailties of hu-

* My readers will remember West's exclamation on the first sight of the Apollo,—"A young Mohawk Indian, by Heaven!"

man nature,) were studying French, music, dancing, drawing, and Italian; and although she quite disapproved of this hash of accomplishments, yet no woman in Christendom could bear to be so entirely outdone by her next neighbour: besides she doubtless calculated that the little they were likely to know of the language would be too soon forgotten to do them any harm; that they would settle into sober tradesmen's wives, content "to scold their maidens in their mother tongue;" and that the only permanent consequence would be, the giving her the power to be of some slight service to the good *émigré*. So the Miss Lanes learned French; and Mrs. Lane, who was one of poor Mrs. Duval's best friends and most constant customers, borrowed all her choicest receipts to compound for the Abbé his favourite dishes, and contrived to fix the lessons at such an hour as should authorize her offering the refreshment which she had so carefully prepared. Bijou, too, the Abbé's pet dog, a beautiful little curly spaniel, of great sagacity and fidelity, always found a dinner ready for him at Mrs. Lane's; and Louis Duval, the master's other pet, was at least equally welcome;—so that the whole trio were soon at home in the Butts. And although Stephen held in abomination all foreigners, and thought it eminently patriotic and national to hate the French and their ways, never had tasted coffee or taken a pinch of snuff in his days; and although the Abbé, on his part, abhorred smoking, and beer, and punch, and loud talking, and all the John Bullisms whereof Stephen was compounded; although Mr. Lane would have held himself guilty of a sin if he had known the French for "how d'ye do?" and the Abbé, teacher of languages though he were, had marvellously contrived to learn no more English than just served him to make out his pupil's translations, (perhaps the constant reading of those incomparable compositions might be the reason why the real spoken idiomatic tongue was still unintelligible to him;) yet they did contrive, in spite of their mutual prejudices and their deficient means of communication, to be on as friendly and as cordial terms as any two men in Belford; and, considering that the Frenchman was a decided aristocrat and the Englishman a violent democrat, and that each knew the other's politics, that is saying much.

But from the castle to the cottage, from the nobleman whose children he taught down to the farmer's wife who furnished him with eggs and butter, the venerable Abbé was a universal favourite. There was something in his very appearance—his small neat person, a little bent, more by sorrow than age—his thin white hair—his mild intelligent countenance, with a sweet placid smile, that spoke more of courtesy than of gaiety—his quiet manner, his gentle voice, and even the broken English, which reminded one that he was a sojourner in a strange land, that awakened a mingled emotion of respect and of pity. His dress, too, always neat, yet never seeming new, contributed to the air of decayed gentility that hung about him; and the beautiful little dog who was his constant attendant, and the graceful boy who so frequently accompanied him, formed an interesting group on the high roads which he frequented; for the good Abbé was so much in request as a teacher, and the amount of his earnings was so considerable, that he might have passed for well-to-do in the world, had not his charity to his poorer countrymen, and his liberality to Louis and to Mrs. Duval, been such as to keep him constantly poor.

Amongst his pupils, and the friends of his pupils, his urbanity and kindness could not fail to make him popular; whilst his gentleness and patience with the stupid, and his fine taste and power of inspiring emulation amongst the cleverer children, rendered him a very valuable master. Besides his large connexion in Belford, he attended, as we have intimated, several families in the neighbourhood, and one or two schools in the smaller towns, at eight or ten miles' distance; and the light and active old man was accustomed to walk to these lessons, with little Bijou for his companion, even in the depth of winter; depending, it may be, on an occasional cast for himself and his dog in the gig of some good-natured traveller, or the cart of some small farmer or his sturdy dame returning from the market-town, (for it is a characteristic of our county that we abound in female drivers—almost all our country wives are capital whips,) who thought themselves well repaid for their civility by a pinch of rappee in the one case, or a "Tank you, madame!" "Moche obligé, sar!" on the other.

Nobody minded a winter's walk less than M. l'Abbé; and as for Bijou, he delighted in it, and would dance and whisk about, jump round his master's feet, and bark for very joy, whenever he saw the hat brushing, and the great-coat putting on, and the gloves taken out of their drawer, in preparation for a sortie, especially in snowy weather—for Bijou loved a frisk in the snow, and Louis liked it no less. But there was one person who never liked these cold and distant rambles, and that personage was Mrs. Duval; and on one dreary morning in January, especially, she opposed them by main and by might. She had had bad dreams, too; and Mrs. Duval was the least in the world superstitious; and "she was sure that no good would come of taking such a walk as that to Chardley, full a dozen miles, on such a day—nobody could be so unreasonable as to expect M. l'Abbé in such weather; and as for Miss Smith's school, Miss Smith's school might wait!"

M. l'Abbé reasoned with her in vain. "Your dreams—bah!—I must go, my dear

little woman. All Miss Smith's pupils are come back from the holidays, and they want their lessons, and they have brought the money to pay me, and I want the money to pay you, and I will bring you a pink riband as bright as your cheeks, and Louis——"

"Oh, pray let me go with you, M. l'Abbé!" interrupted Louis.

"And Louis shall stay with you," pursued M. l'Abbé. "You must not go, my dear boy; stay with your mother; always be a good son to your good mother, and I will bring you a book. I will bring you a new Horace, since you get on so well with your Latin. God bless you, my dear boy! Allons, Bijou!" And M. l'Abbé was setting off.

"At least stay all night!" interposed Mrs. Duval; "don't come home in the dark, pray!"

"Bah!" replied the Abbé, laughing.

"And with money, too! and so many bad people about! and such a dream as I have had!" again exclaimed Madame Duval. "I thought that two wolves——"

"Your dream!—bah!" ejaculated the Abbé. "I shall bring you a pink riband, and be home by ten." And with these words he and Bijou departed.

Ten o'clock came—a cold, frosty night, not moonlight, but starlight, and with so much snow upon the ground, that the beaten pathway on the high-road to Chardley might be easily traced. Mrs. Duval who had been fidgety all through the day, became more so as the evening advanced, particularly as Louis importuned her vehemently to let him go and meet their dear lodger.

"You go! No, indeed!" replied Madame Duval—"at this time of night, and after my dream! It's quite bad enough to have M. l'Abbé wandering about the high roads, and money with him, and so many bad people stirring. I saw one great, tall, dangerous-looking fellow at the door this morning, who seemed as if he had been listening when he talked of bringing money home: I should not wonder if he broke into the house—and my dream, too! Stay where you are, Louis. I won't hear of your going."

And the poor boy, who had been taking down his furred cap to go, looked at his mother's anxious face, and stayed.

The hours wore away—eleven o'clock struck, and twelve—and still there were no tidings of the Abbé. Mrs. Duval began to comfort herself that he must have stayed to sleep at Chardley; that the Miss Smiths, whom she knew to be kind women, had insisted on his sleeping at their house; and she was preparing to go to bed in that persuasion, when a violent scratching and whining was heard at the door, and on Louis running to open it, little Bijou rushed in, covered with dirt, and without his master.

"Oh, my dream!" exclaimed Mrs. Duval. "Louis, I thought that two wolves——"

"Mother," interrupted the boy, "see how Bijou is jumping upon me, and whining, and then running to the door, as if to entice me to follow him. I must go."

"Oh, Louis! remember!"—again screamed his mother—"Remember the great ill-looking fellow who was listening this morning?"

"You forget, dear mother, that we all spoke in French, and that he could not have understood a word," returned Louis.

"But my dream!" persisted Mrs. Duval. "My dreams always come true. Remember the pot I dreamt of your finding in the ruins, and which, upon digging for, you *did* find."

"Which you dreamt was a pot of gold, and which turned out to be a broken paint-pot," replied Louis, impatiently. "Mother," added he, "I am sorry to disobey you, but see how this poor dog is dragging me to the door; hark how he whines! And look! look! there is blood upon his coat! Perhaps his master has fallen and hurt himself, and even my slight help may be of use. I must go, and I will."

And following the word with the deed, Louis obeyed the almost speaking action of the little dog, and ran quickly out of the house, on the road to Chardley. His mother, after an instant of vague panic, recovered herself enough to alarm the neighbours, and send more efficient help than a lad of eleven years old to assist in the search.

With a beating heart the brave and affectionate boy followed the dog, who led with a rapid pace and an occasional low moan along the high road to Chardley. The night had become milder, the clouds were driving along the sky, and a small, sleety rain fell by gusts; all, in short, bespoke an approaching thaw, although the ground continued covered with snow, which cast a cold, dreary light on every object. For nearly three miles Louis and Bijou pursued their way alone. At the end of that time, they were arrested by shouts and lanterns advancing rapidly from the town, and the poor lad recognised the men whom his mother had sent to his assistance.

"Any news of the poor French gentleman, master?" inquired John Gleve, the shoemaker, as he came up, almost breathless with haste. "It's lucky that I and Martin had two pair of boots to finish, and had not left our work; for poor Mrs. Duval there is half crazy with her fears for him and her dread about you. How couldst thou think of running off alone? What good could a lad like thee do, frightening his poor mother?—And yet one likes un for 't," added John, softening as he proceeded in his harangue; "one likes un for 't mainly. But look at the dog!" pursued he, interrupting himself; "look at the dog, how he's snuffing and shuffling about in the snow! And hark how he whines and barks, questing like! And see what a trampling there 's been here, and how the snow on the side of the path is trodden about!"

"Hold down the lantern!" exclaimed Louis. "Give me the light, I beseech you. Look here! this is blood—*his* blood!" sobbed the affectionate boy; and, guided partly by that awful indication, partly by the disturbed snow, and partly by the dog, who, trembling in every limb, and keeping up a low moan, still pursued the track, they clambered over a gate into a field by the road-side; and in a ditch, at a little distance, found what all expected to find—the lifeless body of the Abbé.

He had been dead apparently for some hours; for the corpse was cold, and the blood had stiffened on two wounds in his body. His pockets had been rifled of his purse and his pocket-book, both of which were found, with what money might have been in them taken out, cast into the hedge at a small distance, together with a sword with a broken hilt, with which the awful deed had probably been committed. Nothing else had been taken from the poor old man. His handkerchief and snuff-box were still in his pocket, together with three yards of rose-coloured riband, neatly wrapped in paper, and a small edition of Horace, with the leaves uncut. It may be imagined with what feelings Mrs. Duval and Louis looked at these tokens of recollection. Her grief found in tears the comfortable relief which Heaven has ordained for woman's sorrow; but Louis could not cry—the consolation was denied him. A fierce spirit of revenge had taken possession of the hitherto gentle and placid boy: to discover and bring to justice the murderer, and to fondle and cherish poor Bijou (who was with difficulty coaxed into taking food, and lay perpetually at the door of the room which contained his old master's body,) seemed to be the only objects for which Louis lived.

The wish to discover the murderer was general throughout the neighbourhood, where the good, the pious, the venerable old man—harmless and inoffensive in word and deed, just, and kind, and charitable—had been so truly beloved and respected. Large rewards were offered by the Catholic gentry,* and every exertion was made by the local police, and the magistracy of the town and country, to accomplish this great object. John Gleve had accurately measured the shoe-marks to and from the ditch where the body was found; but farther than the gate of the field they had not thought to trace the footsteps; and a thaw having come on, all signs had disappeared before the morning. It had been ascertained that the Miss Smiths had paid him, besides some odd money, in two £10 notes of the Chardley bank, the numbers of which were known; but of them no tidings could be procured. He had left their house, on his return, about six o'clock in the evening, and had been seen to pass through a turnpike-gate, midway between the two towns, about eight, when, with his usual courtesy, he made a cheerful good-night to the gate-keeper; and this was the last that had been heard of him. No suspicious person had been observed in the neighbourhood; the most sagacious and experienced officers were completely at fault; and the coroner's inquest was obliged to bring in the vague and unsatisfactory verdict of "Found murdered, by some person or persons unknown."

Many loose people, such as beggars and vagrants, and wandering packmen, were, how-

* I cannot name the Catholic gentry without paying my humble but most sincere tribute of respect to the singularly high character of the old Catholic families in this county. It seems as if the oppression under which they so long laboured, had excited them to oppose to such injustice the passive but powerful resistance of high moral virtue, of spotless integrity, of chivalrous honour, and of a diffusive charity, which their oppressors would have done well to imitate. Amongst them are to be found the names of Throckmorton, the friend and patron of Cowper, and of Blount, so wound up with every recollection of Pope, and of Eyston, of East Hendrid, more ancient, perhaps, than any house in the county, whose curious old chapel, appended to his mansion, is mentioned in a deed bearing date the 19th of May, A. D. 1323, now in the possession of the family. Nothing can be more interesting than the account, in a MS. belonging to Mr. Eyston, of the re-opening of this chapel during the short period in which the Roman Catholic religion was tolerated under James the Second; and of the persecution which succeeded at the Revolution. These scenes are now matters of history, and of history only; since the growing wisdom and the humanizing spirit of the legislature and the age forbid even the fear of their recurrence; but as curious historical documents, and as a standing lesson against bigotry and intolerance, however styled, a collection of such narratives (and many such, I believe, exist amongst the old Catholic families,) would be very valuable. One of the most remarkable MSS. that I have happened to meet with, is an account of the life and character of Sir Francis Englefylde, Knt., privy counsellor to Queen Mary, who retired into Spain to escape from the persecutions of Elizabeth, and died in an exile which he shared with many of his most eminent countrymen. He also belonged to our neighbourhood; the family of Englefield, now extinct, being the ancient possessors of Whiteknights. The Catholic gentleman, however, of our own day, whom Belford has the greatest cause to rank amongst its benefactors, is our neighbour—I will venture to say our friend—Mr. Wheble, a man eminently charitable, liberal, and enlightened, whose zeal for his own church, whilst it does not impede the exercise of the widest and most diffusive benevolence towards the professors of other forms of faith, has induced him to purchase all that could be purchased of the ruins of the great abbey, and to rescue the little that was still undesecrated by the prison, the school, and the wharf. Of these fine remains of the splendour and the piety of our ancestors, the beautiful arch and the site of the abbey-church are fortunately amongst the portions thus preserved from baser uses. It is impossible not to sympathize strongly with the feeling which dictated this purchase, and equally impossible not to lament, if only as a matter of taste, that there was no such guardian hand fifty years ago, to prevent the erection of the county jail, and the subsequent introduction of quays and national schools amongst some of the most extensive and finely situated monastic ruins in England, now irreparably contaminated by objects the most unsightly, and associations the most painful and degrading.

ever, apprehended, and obliged to give an account of themselves; and on one of these, a rag-man, called James Wilson, something like suspicion was at last fixed. The sword with which the murder was committed, an old regimental sword, with the mark and number of the regiment ground out, had, as I have said before, a broken hilt; and round this hilt was wound a long strip of printed calico, of a very remarkable pattern, which a grocer's wife in Belford, attracted by the strange curiosity with which vulgar persons pursue such sights, to go and look at it as it lay exposed for recognition on a table in the Town Hall, remembered to have seen in the shape of a gown on the back of a girl who had lived with her a twelvemonth before; and the girl, on being sought out in a neighbouring village, deposed readily to having sold the gown, several weeks back, to the rag-man in question. The measure of the shoes also fitted; but they unluckily were of a most common shape and size. Wilson brought a man from the paper-mill, to prove that the entire gown in question had been carried there by him, with other rags, about a month before; and called other witnesses, who made out a complete alibi on the night in question; so that the magistrates, although strongly prejudiced against him, from countenance and manner,—the down look and the daring audacity with which nature, or rather evil habit, often stamps the ruffian,—were, after several examinations, on the point of discharging him, when young Louis, who had attended the whole inquiry with an intelligence and an intensity of interest which, boy as he was, had won for him the privilege of being admitted even to the private examinations of the magistrates, and whose ill opinion of Wilson had increased every hour, he himself hardly knew why, suddenly exclaimed, "Stop until I bring a witness!" and darted out of the room.

During the interval of his absence,—for such was the power of the boy's intense feeling and evident intelligence, that the magistrates *did* stop for him,—one of the police-officers happened to observe how tightly the prisoner grasped his hat. "Is it mere anger?" thought he within himself; "or is it agitation? or can they have been such fools as not to search the lining?"—"Let me look at that hat of yours, Wilson," said he aloud.

"It has been searched," replied Wilson, still holding it. "What do you want with the hat?"

"I want to see the lining."

"There is no lining," replied the prisoner, grasping it still tighter.

"Let me look at it, nevertheless. Take it from him," rejoined the officer. "Ah, ha! here is a little ragged bit of lining, though, sticking pretty fast too; for as loose and as careless as it looks,—a fine, cunning, hiding-place! Give me a knife—a penknife!" said the myrmidon of justice, retiring with his knife and the hat to the window, followed by the eager looks of the prisoner, whose attention, however, was immediately called to a nearer danger, by the return of Louis, with little Bijou in his arms. The poor dog flew at him instantly, barking, growling, quivering, almost shrieking with fury, bit his heels and his legs, and was with difficulty dragged from him, so strong had passion made the faithful creature.

"Look!" said Louis. "I brought him from his master's grave to bear witness against his murderer. "Look!"

"Their worships will hardly commit me on the evidence of a dog," observed Wilson, recovering himself.

"But see here," rejoined the police-officer, producing two dirty bits of paper, most curiously folded, from the old hat. "Here are the two Chardley notes—the 10*l.* notes—signed David Williams, Nos. 1025 and 662. What do you say to that evidence? You and the little dog are right, my good boy: this is the murderer, sure enough. There can be no doubt about committing him now."

It is hardly necessary to add, that James Wilson was committed, or that proof upon proof poured in to confirm his guilt and discredit his witnesses. He died confessing the murder; and Bijou and Louis, somewhat appeased by having brought the criminal to justice, found comfort in their mutual affection, and in a tender recollection of their dear old friend and master.

Note.—Not to go back to the dog of Montargis, and other well-attested accounts of murderers detected by dogs, I can bring a living spaniel to corroborate the fact, that these faithful and sagacious animals do seek assistance for their masters when any evil befalls them. The story, as told to me by Bramble's present mistress, whom I have the great pleasure to reckon amongst my friends, is as follows:—

The blacksmith of a small village in Buckinghamshire went blind, and was prevented from pursuing his occupation. He found, however, a friend in the surgeon of the neighbourhood, a man of singular kindness and benevolence, who employed him to carry out medicines, which he was enabled to do by the aid of a dog and a chain. But old John was a severe master, and of his dogs many died, and many ran away. At last, he had the good fortune to light upon our friend Bramble, a large black-and-white spaniel, of remarkable symmetry and beauty, with wavy hair, very long ears, feathered legs and a bushy tail, and with sagacity and fidelity equal to his beauty. Under Bramble's guidance, blind John performed his journeys in perfect safety; wherever the poor dog had been once, he was sure

to know his way again; and he appeared to discover, as if by instinct, to what place his master wished to go. One point of his conduct was peculiarly striking. He constantly accompanied his master to church, and lay there perfectly quiet during the whole service. For three years that he formed regularly one of the congregation, he was never known to move or to make the slightest noise.

One bitter night old John had been on a journey to Woburn, and not returning at his usual hour, the relations with whom he lived went to bed, as it was not uncommon for the blind man, when engaged on a longer expedition than common, to sleep from home. The cottage was accordingly shut up, and the inhabitants, tired with labour, went to bed and slept soundly. The people at a neighbouring cottage, however, fancied that they heard, during the long winter night, repeated howlings as of a dog in distress; and when they rose in the morning, the first thing they heard was, that old John lay dead in a ditch not far from his own door. The poor dog was found close by the body; and it was ascertained by the marks on the path, that he had dragged his chain backward and forward from the ditch to the cottage, in the vain hope of procuring such assistance as might possibly have saved his master.

Luckily for Bramble, the benevolent surgeon, always his very good friend, was called in to examine if any spark of life remained in the body; and he having ascertained that poor John was fairly dead, told the story of the faithful dog to his present excellent mistress, with whom Bramble is as happy as the day is long.

It is comfortable to meet with a bit of that justice which, because it is so rare, people call poetical, in real actual life; and I verily believe that in this case Bramble's felicity is quite equal to his merits, high as they undoubtedly are. The only drawback that I have ever heard hinted at, is a tendency on his part to grow over-fat; a misfortune which doubtless results from his present good feed, coming after a long course of starvation.

Now that I am telling these stories of dogs, I cannot resist the temptation of recording one short anecdote of my pet spaniel Dash, a magnificent animal, of whose beauty I have spoken elsewhere, and who really does all but speak himself.

Every May I go to the Silchester woods, to gather wild lilies of the valley. Last year the numbers were, from some cause or other, greatly diminished: the roots, it is true, were there, but so scattered over the beautiful terraces of that unrivalled amphitheatre of woods, and the blossoms so rare, that in the space of several acres, thinly covered with the plants and their finely-lined transparent green leaves, it was difficult to procure half-a-dozen of those delicate flower-stalks hung with snowy bells, and amidst the shifting lights and shadows of the coppice, where the sunbeams seemed to dance through the branches, still more difficult to discover the few that there were. I went searching drearily through the wood, a little weary of seeking and not finding, when Dash, who had been on his own devices after pheasants and hares, returning to me, tired with his sort of sport, began to observe mine; and at once discerning my object and my perplexity, went gravely about the coppice, lily hunting; finding them far more quickly than I did, stopping, wagging his tail, and looking round at me by the side of every flower, until I came and gathered it; and then, as soon as I had secured one, pursuing his search after another, and continuing to do so without the slightest intermission until it was time to go home. I am half afraid to tell this story, although it is as true as that there are lilies in Silchester wood; and the anecdote of Cowper's dog Beau and the water-lily is somewhat of a case in point. Whether Dash found the flowers by scent or by sight, I cannot tell: probably by the latter.

THE TAMBOURINE.

A CHEESE-FAIR ADVENTURE.

Every body likes a fair. Some people, indeed, especially of the order called fine ladies, pretend that they do not. But go to the first that occurs in the neighbourhood, and there, amongst the thickest of the jostling crowd, with staring carters treading upon their heels, and grinning farmers' boys rubbing against their petticoats, — there, in the very middle of the confusion, you shall be sure to find them, fine ladies though they be! They still, it is true, cry "How disagreeable!"— but there they are.

Now, the reasons against liking a fair are far more plausible than those on the other side: the dirt, the wet, the sun, the rain, the wind, the noise, the cattle, the crowd, the cheats, the pick-pockets, the shows with nothing worth seeing, the stalls with nothing worth buying, the danger of losing your money, the certainty of losing your time,—all these are valid causes for dislike; whilst, in defence of the fair, there is little more to plead than the general life of the scene, the pleasure of looking on so many happy faces, the consciousness that one day, at least, in the year, is the peasant's holiday—and the undeniable fact, that, deny it as they may, all English people, even the cold fine lady, or the colder fine gentleman, do, at the bottom of their hearts, like a fair. It is a taste, or a want of taste, that belongs to the national temperament, is born with us, grows up with us, and will never be got rid of, let fashion declaim against it as she may.

The great fair at Belford had, however, even higher pretensions to public favour than a deep-rooted old English feeling. It was a scene of business as well as of amusement, being not only a great market for horses and cattle, but one of the principal marts for the celebrated cheese of the great dairy counties. Factors from the West, and dealers from London, arrived days before the actual fair-day; and wagon after wagon, laden with the round, hard, heavy merchandise, rumbled slowly into the Forbury, where the great space before the school-house, the whole of the boys' playground, was fairly covered with stacks of Cheddar and North Wilts. Fancy the singular effect of piles of cheeses, several feet high, extending over a whole large cricket-ground, and divided only by narrow paths littered with straw, amongst which wandered the busy chapmen, offering a taste of their wares to their cautious customers, the country shop-keepers, (who poured in from every village within twenty miles,) and the thrifty housewives of the town, who, bewildered by the infinite number of samples, which, to an uneducated palate, seemed all alike, chose, at last, almost at random! Fancy the effect of this remarkable scene, surrounded by cattle, horses, shows, and people, the usual moving picture of a fair; the fine Gothic church of St. Nicholas on one side; the old arch of the abbey, and the abrupt eminence called Forbury Hill, crowned by a grand clump of trees, on the other; the Mall, with its row of old limes, and its handsome houses, behind; and, in front, the great river flowing slowly through green meadows, and backed by the high ridge of Oxfordshire hills;—imagine this brilliant panorama, and you will never wonder that the most delicate ladies braved the powerful fumes of the cheese — an odour so intense that it even penetrated the walls and windows of the school-house—to contemplate the scene. When lighted up at night, it was, perhaps, still more fantastic and attractive, particularly before the Zoological gardens had afforded a home to the travelling wild beasts, whose roars and howlings at feeding-time used to mingle so grotesquely with the drums, trumpets, and fiddles, of the dramatic and equestrian exhibitions, and the laugh, and shout, and song, of the merry visiters.

A most picturesque scene, of a truth, was the Belford cheese-fair; and not always unprofitable: at least, I happen to know one instance, where, instead of having his pocket picked by the light-fingered gentry, whom mobs of all sorts are sure to collect, an honest person of my acquaintance was lucky enough to come by his own again, and recover in that unexpected place a piece of property of which he had been previously defrauded.

The case was as follows:—

The male part of our little establishment consists not of one man-servant, as is usual with persons of small fortune and some gentility, who keep, like that other poor and genteel personage, yclept Don Quixote, a horse and a brace of greyhounds, (to say nothing of my own pony phaeton and my dog Dash,) but of two boys—the one a perfect pattern of a lad of fifteen or thereabout, the steadiest, quietest, and most serviceable youth that ever bore the steady name of John; the other, an urchin called Ben, some two years younger, a stunted dwarf, or rather a male fairy—Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, for instance — full of life and glee, and good-humour, and innocent mischief—a tricksy spirit, difficult to manage, but kindly withal, and useful after his own fashion, though occasionally betrayed into mistakes by over-shrewdness, just as other boys blunder from stupidity. Instead of conveying a message word for word as delivered, according to the laudable practice of the errand gods and goddesses, the Mercurys and Irises in Homer's immortal poems,* master Ben hath a trick of thinking for his master, and clogging his original missive with certain amendments and additional clauses hatched in his own fertile brain.

Occasionally, also, he is rather super-subtle in his rigid care of his master's interest, and exercises an over-scrupulous watchfulness in cases where less caution would be more agreeable. At this very last fair, for instance, we had a horse to sell, which was confided to a neighbouring farmer to dispose of, with the usual charges against being overreached in his bargain, or defrauded of the money when sold. "I'll see to that," responded Ben, taking the words out of the mouth of the slow, civil farmer Giles,—"I'll see to that; I'm to ride the mare, and nobody shall get her from me without the money." Off they set accordingly, and the horse, really a fine animal, was speedily sold to a neighbouring baronet, a man of large estate in the county, who sent his compliments to my father, and that he would call and settle for him in a day or two. This message perfectly satisfied our chapman the farmer, but would, by no means, do for Ben, who insisted on receiving the money before delivering the steed: and after being paid by a check on a county banker, actually rode to the bank to make sure of the cash before he would give up his charge, either to the amazed Sir Robert or his wondering groom. "I suppose, Ben, you did not know Sir Robert?" inquired his master, rather scandalized, when Ben, finding him out in the fair, handed him the money triumphantly, and told his story. "Why, sir," rejoined Ben, "I knew him as well as I know

* "The schoolmaster is abroad!" If ever he arrive at the point of teaching Greek to the future inmates of the kitchen, the stable, and the servants' hall, which really seems not unlikely, I hope he will direct their particular attention to those parts of the Iliad and Odyssey.

you; but great people's money is sometimes as hard to get as poor ones'; besides, this Sir Robert is a prodigal chap, dresses as smart and talks as fine as his valet — 'twas best to secure the money if he were ten times over a baronet. You can tell him, though, that I did not know him, if you like, sir, the next time you meet." And the white fib was told, accordingly, and the affront happily got over.

This fact, however illustrative of Master Ben's general character, has nothing to do with our present story, though, as the *dénouement* of the tambourine adventure took place on the same day, the two legends may be considered as in some small degree connected.

Amongst Ben's other peculiarities was a strong faculty of imitation, which he possessed in common with monkeys, magpies, and other clever and mischievous animals, but which, in his particular case, applied as it generally was to copying so correct a model as John, served as a sort of counterpoise to his more volatile propensities, something like the ballast to the ship, or the balance-wheel to the machinery. The point to which this was carried was really ludicrous. If you saw John in the garden carrying a spade, you were pretty sure to see Ben following him with a rake. When John watered my geraniums after the common fashion of pouring water into the pots, Ben kept close behind him, with a smaller implement, pouring the refreshing element into the pans. Whilst John washed one wheel of my pony phaeton, Ben was, at the self-same moment, washing another. Were a pair of shoes sent to be blacked, so sure as John assumed the brush to polish the right shoe, Ben took possession of the left. He cleaned the forks to John's knives; and if a coat were to be beaten, you were certain to hear the two boys thumping away at once, on different sides.

Of course, if this propensity were observable in their work, it became infinitely more so in their amusements. If John played marbles, so did Ben; if cricket, there, in the same game, on the same side, was Ben. If the one went a-nutting, you were sure, in the self-same copse, to find his faithful adherent; and when John, last winter, bought a fiddle, and took to learning music, it followed, as a matter of necessity, that Ben should become musical also. The only difficulty was the choice of an instrument. A fiddle was out of the question, not only because the price was beyond his finances, and larger than any probable sum out of which he could reasonably expect to coax those who, wrongfully enough, were accused of spoiling him—the young gentleman being what is vulgarly called spoiled, long before he came into their hands—but because Master Ben had a very rational and well-founded doubt of his own patience, (John, besides his real love of the art, being naturally of a plodding disposition, widely different from the mercurial temperament of his light-hearted and light-headed follower,) and desired to obtain some implement of sound, (for he was not very particular as to its sweetness,) on which he might, with all possible speed, obtain sufficient skill to accompany his comrade in his incessant, and, at first, most untunable practice.

Ben's original trial was an old battered flageolet, bestowed upon him by the ostler at the Rose, for whom he occasionally performed odd jobs, which, at first, was obstinately mute, in spite of all his blowings, and when it did become vocal. under his strenuous efforts, emitted such a series of alternate shrieks, and groans, and squeaks, as fairly frightened the neighbourhood, and made John stop his ears. So Ben found it convenient to put aside that instrument, which, in spite of the ostler's producing from it a very respectable imitation of "Auld Lang Syne," Ben pronounced to be completely good for nothing.

His next attempt was on a flute, which looked sufficiently shapeable and glittering to have belonged to a far higher performer, and which was presented to him by our excellent neighbour, Mr. Murray's smart footman, who being often at our house with notes and messages from his mistress, had become captivated, like his betters, by Ben's constant gaiety and good-humour — the delightful festivity of temper and fearless readiness of wit, which rendered the poor country-boy so independent, so happy, and so enviable. Mr. Thomas presented his superb flute to Ben — and Ben tried for three whole days to make it utter any sound — but, alas! he tried in vain. So he honestly and honourably returned the gift to Mr. Thomas, with a declaration "that he had no doubt but the flute was an excellent flute, only that he had not breath to play on it; he was afraid of his lungs." Ben afraid of his lungs! whose voice could be heard, of a windy day, from one end of the village street to the other — ay, to the very hill-top, rising over all the din of pigs, geese, children, carriages, horses, and cows! Ben in want of breath! Ben! whose tongue during the whole four-and-twenty hours, was never still for a moment, except when he was asleep, and who even stood suspected of talking in his dreams! Ben in want of breath! However, he got out of the scrape, by observing, that it was only common civility to his friend, Mr. Thomas, to lay the fault on himself rather than on the flute, which, as Ben sagaciously, and, I think, truly observed, was like the razors of the story, "made for sale and not for use."

The next experiment was more successful.

It so happened that a party of gipsies had pitched their tent and tethered their donkeys in Kibes-lane, and fowls were disappearing from the henroost, and linen vanishing from the clothesline, as is usual where an encamp-

ment of that picturesque* but slippery order of vagabonds takes place. The party in question consisted as usual of tall, lean, suspicious-looking men, an aged sibyl or two of fortune-telling aspect, two or three younger women with infants at their backs, and children of all ages and sizes, from fifteen downwards. One lad, apparently about our hero's age, but considerably larger, had struck up an acquaintance with Ben, who used to pass that way to fetch a dole of milk from our kind neighbours the Murrays, and usually took his master's greyhounds with him for company: and had made sufficient advances towards familiarity to challenge him to a coursing expedition, promising that their curs should find hares, provided the greyhounds would catch them; and even endeavouring to pique him on the point of honour (for Ben was obviously proud of his beautiful and high-bred dogs,) by insinuating that the game might be more easily found than caught. Ben, however, too conversant with the game-laws to fall into the snare, laughed at the gipsy-boy, and passed quietly on his way.

The next day, Dick (for such was the name of his new acquaintance) made an attack upon Ben, after a different fashion, and with a more favourable result.

Perched on a knoll, under a fine clump of oaks, at a turning of the lane, stood the gipsy-boy, beating the march in Bluebeard, with the most approved flourishes, on a tambourine of the largest size. Ben was enchanted. He loitered to listen, stopped to admire, proceeded to question Dick as to the ownership of the instrument, and on finding that this splendid implement of noise was the lad's own property, and to be sold to the best bidder, commenced a chaffering and bargaining, which in its various modifications of beating down on one side, and crying up on the other, and pretended indifference on both, lasted five days and a half, and finally became the happy possessor of the tambourine for the sum of four shillings—half a guinea having been the price originally demanded.

Who now so triumphant as Ben! The tambourine (though greatly the worse for wear) was still a most efficient promoter of din, and for four-and-twenty hours (for I really believe that during the first night of its belonging to him the boy never went to bed) it was one incessant tornado of beating, jingling, and rumbling—the whole house was deafened by the intolerable noise which the enraptured tambourinist was pleased to call music. At the end of that time the parchment (already pretty well worn) fairly cracked, as well it might, under such unmerciful pommelling, and a new head, as Ben called it, became necessary. It had been warranted to wear for six months, under pain of forfeiting eighteen pence by the former possessor; but on repairing to Kibes-lane, Dick and his whole tribe, tents, donkeys, and curs, had disappeared, and the evil was so far without remedy. The purchaser had exhausted his funds; every body was too much out of humour with the noise to think of contributing money to promote its renewal, and any other boy would have despaired.

But Ben was a lad of resource. Amongst his various friends and patrons, he numbered the groom of an eminent solicitor in Belford, to whom he stated his case, begging him to procure for him some reversionary parchment, stained, or blotted, or discoloured, or what not—any thing would do, so that it were whole; and the groom was interested, and stated the case to the head clerk; and the clerk was amused, and conveyed the petition to his master; and the master laughed, and sent Ben forthwith a cancelled deed; and the tambourine was mended; and for another four and twenty hours we were stunned.

At the end of that time, having laid down the instrument from pure weariness, his left arm being stiff from holding and tossing, and his right knuckles raw from thumping, Ben deposited his beloved treasure in a nook which he had especially prepared for it in the stable; and on going to pay it a visit the next morning, the dear tambourine was gone—vanished—stolen—lost, as we all thought, for ever! and poor Ben was so grieved at the loss of his plaything, that, nuisance as the din had been, we could not help being sorry too, and had actually commissioned him to look out for another second-hand instrument, and promised to advance the purchase-money, when the aspect of affairs was suddenly changed by the adventure before alluded to, which occurred at the great cheese-fair at Belford.

After receiving the money from Sir Robert—or rather, after getting his check cashed at the bank, and delivering the horse to the groom, as I have before stated,—Ben having transferred the notes to his master, and received half-a-crown to purchase a fairing, proceeded to solace himself by taking a leisurely view of the different shows, and having laughed at Punch, stared at the wild-beasts, and admired the horsemanship, was about to enter a booth, to enjoy the delight of a three-

* Besides their eminent picturesqueness, there is a poetical feeling about these wandering tribes, that can hardly fail to interest. The following anecdote, illustrative of this fact, is new to me, and may be so to my readers:—One fine spring morning, a friend of mine saw a young gipsy-girl jumping and clapping her hands, and shouting to an elderly female, "I have done it! I have done it!"—"Done what?" inquired my friend.—"Set my foot on nine daisies at once, ma'am," was the reply; and then she and an elder one began chanting a song, the burden of which was, as near as the auditress could recollect, as follows:

"Summer is come!
With the daisy bud,
To gladden our tents
By the merry green wood;
Summer is come! Summer is come!"

penny play, when, on a platform in front, where the characters, in full costume, were exhibiting themselves to attract an audience to the entertainment about to commence, he was struck by the apparition of a black boy in a turban, flourishing a tambourine, and in spite of the change of colour in the player, and a good deal of new gilding on the instrument, was instantly convinced that he beheld his quondam friend Dick the gipsy, and his own beloved tambourine!

Ben was by no means a person to suffer such a discovery to pass unimproved; he clambered on the railing that surrounded the booth, leaped on the platform, seized at one clutch the instrument and the performer, and in spite of the resistance offered by a gentleman in a helmet and spangles, a most Amazonian lady in a robe and diadem, and a personage, sex unknown, in a pair of silver wings, gold trousers, and a Brutus wig, he succeeded in mastering the *soi-disant* negro-boy, and raising such a clamour as brought to his assistance a troop of constables and other officials, and half the mob of the fair.

Ben soon made known his grievance. "He's no blackamoor!" shouted the lad, dexterously cleaning with a wetted finger part of the cheek of the simulated African, and discovering the tanned brown skin underneath. "He's a thief and a gipsy! And this is my tambourine! I can prove the fact!" roared Ben. "I can swear to the parchment, and so can lawyer Lyons," added Ben (displaying the mutilated but clerk-like writing, by which Simon Lackland, Esq., assigned over to Daniel Holdfast, Gent. the manor and demesnes, woods and fisheries, parklands and pightles, of Flyaway, in consideration, and so forth.) "I can swear to my tambourine, and so can my master, and so can the lawyer! Take us to the bench! Carry us before the Mayor! I can swear to the tambourine, and the thief who is playing it, who is no more a negro than I am!" pursued Ben, sweeping off another streak of the burnt cork from the sunburnt face of the luckless Dick. "I'm Doctor M's. boy," bawled Ben, "and he'll see me righted, and the tambourine's mine, and I'll have it!"

And have it he did; for the lawyer and his master both happened to be within hearing, and bore satisfactory testimony to his veracity; and the mob, who love to administer summary justice, laid hold of the culprit, whom Ben, having recovered his property, was willing to let off scot-free, and amused themselves with very literally washing the blackamoor white by means of a sound ducking in the nearest horse-pond. And the tambourine was brought home in triumph; and we are as much stunned as ever.

MRS. HOLLIS, THE FRUITERER.

At the corner of St. Stephen's churchyard, forming a sort of angle at the meeting of four roads, stands a small shop, the front abutting on the open space caused by the crossing of the streets, one side looking into the Butts, the other into the church-yard, and one end only connected with other houses; a circumstance which, joined to the three open sides being, so to say, glazed—literally composed of shop-windows, gives an agreeable singularity to the little dwelling of our fruiterer. By day it looks something like a greenhouse, or rather like the last of a row of stovehouses; and the resemblance is increased by the contents of the shop-windows, consisting of large piled-up plates of every fruit in season, interspersed with certain pots of plants which, in that kind of atmosphere, never blow, —outlandish plants, names unknown, whose green, fleshy, regular leaves, have a sort of fruity-look with them, seem as if intended to be eaten, and assort wonderfully well with the shaddocks, dates, cocoa-nuts, pine-apples, and other rare and foreign fruits, amongst which they stand. By night it has the air of a Chinese lantern, all light and colour; and whether by night or by day, during full eight months of the year, that ever-open door sends forth the odours of countless chests of oranges, with which, above all other productions of the earth, the little shop is filled, and which comes steaming across the pavement like a perfume.

I have an exceeding affection for oranges and the smell of oranges in every shape: the leaf, the flower, the whole flowering tree, with its exquisite elegance,* its rare union of richness and delicacy, and its aristocratic scarcity and unwillingness to blossom, or even to grow in this climate, without light and heat, and shelter and air, and all the appliances which its sweetness and beauty so well deserve. I even love that half-evergreen, flexible honey-

* So elegant is it, that the very association connected with it will sometimes confer a grace not its own. For instance, an indifferent play called Elvira, taken from the Spanish some two hundred years ago by George Digby, Earl of Bristol, is really made tasteful by the scene being laid partly amongst the orange-groves of a Spanish garden, and partly in the "perfuming room," a hall, or laboratory, where the flowers were distilled, and in which the mistress sets one of her attendants, a lady in disguise, the pretty task of gathering and changing the flowers. No one can conceive the effect of this tasteful fixing of the scene, in heightening and ennobling the female characters. Our own green-houses were originally built for tender evergreens, chiefly oranges and myrtles; and an orangery is still one of the rarest and most elegant appurtenances to a great house. Some of my happiest days were spent in that belonging to Belford Manor-house, looking out from amid orange-trees, second only to those at Hampton Court, on gay flowers, green trees, and a bright river, in the sunny month of June, and enjoying society worthy of the scenery.

suckle, with the long wreaths of flowers, which does condescend to spread and flourish, and even to blow for half the year, all the better, because its fragrance approaches nearer to that of the orange blossom than any other that I know: and the golden fruit with its golden rind, I have loved both for the scent and the taste from the day when a tottering child, laughing and reaching after the prize which I had scarcely words enough to ask for, it was doled out to me in quarters, through the time when, a little older, I was promoted to the possession of half an orange to my own share, and that still prouder hour when I attained the object of my ambition, and had a whole orange to do what I liked with, up to this very now, when, if oranges were still things to sigh for, I have only to send to Mrs. Hollis's shop, and receive in return for one shilling, lawful money of Great Britain, more of the golden fruit than I know what to do with. Every body has gone through this chapter of the growth and vanity of human wishes—has longed for the fruit, not only for its own sweetness, but as a mark of property and power which vanish when possessed — great to the child, to the woman nothing. But I still love oranges better and care for them more than grown people usually do, and above all things I like the smell; the rather, perhaps, that it puts me in mind of the days when, at school in London, I used to go to the play so often, and always found the house scented with the quantity of orange-peel, in the pit, so that to this hour that particular fragrance brings John Kemble to my recollection. I certainly like it the better on that account, and as certainly, although few persons can be less like the great tragedian—glorious John!—as certainly I like it none the worse for recalling to my mind, my friend Mrs. Hollis.*

As long as I can recollect, Mrs. Hollis has been the inhabitant of this grand depôt of choice fruits, the inmate not so much of the house as the shop. I never saw her out of that well-glazed apartment, or heard of any one that did, nor did I ever see the shop without her. She was as much a fixture there as one of her flowerless plants, and seemed as little subject to change or decay in her own person. From seven o'clock, when it was opened, till nine, when the shutters were closed, there she sat in one place, from whence she seldom stirred, a chair behind the right-hand counter, where she could conveniently reach her most tempting merchandise, and hold discourse with her friends and customers, (terms which in her case were nearly synonymous,) even although they advanced no nearer towards the sanctum than the step at the door. There she has presided, the very priestess of that temple of Pomona, for more years than I can well reckon,—from her youth (if ever she were young,) to now, when, although far from looking so, she must, I suppose, according to the register, be accounted old. What can have preserved her in this vigorous freshness, unless it be the aroma of the oranges, nobody can tell. There she sits, a tall, stout, square, upright figure, surmounted by a pleasant comely face, eyes as black as a sloe, cheeks as round as an apple, and a complexion as ruddy as a peach, as fine a specimen of a healthy, hearty English tradeswoman, the feminine of "John Bull," as one would desire to see on a summer day.

One circumstance which has probably contributed not a little to that want of change in her appearance, which makes people who have been away from Belford for twenty years or more declare, that every thing was altered except Mrs. Hollis, but that she and her shop were as if they had left it only yesterday, is undoubtedly her singular adherence to one style of dress — a style which in her youth must have had the effect of making her look old, but which now, at a more advanced period of life, suits her exactly. Her costume is very neat, and, as it never can have been at any time fashionable, has the great advantage of never looking old-fashioned. Fancy a dark gown, the sleeves reaching just below the elbow, cotton in summer, stuff or merino in winter, with dark mittens to meet the sleeves; a white double muslin handkerchief outside of the gown, and a handsome shawl over that, pinned so as not to meet in front; a white apron, a muslin cap with a highish formal crown, a plaited muslin border trimmed with narrow edging, (I dare say she never wore such a gewgaw as a bit of net in her life,) a plaited *chinnum* to match fastened to the cap at either ear, and a bit of sober-coloured satin riband pinned round without bow or any other accompaniment; imagine all this delicately neat and clean, and you will have some notion of Mrs. Hollis. There is a spice of coquetry in this costume — at least, there would be, if adopted with malice prepense, it is so becoming. But as she is, probably, wholly unconscious of its peculiar allurement, she has the advantage without the sin, the charm "without the illness should attend it."

Nobody that knew Mrs. Hollis would suspect her of coquetry, or of any thing implying design or contrivance of any sort. She was a thoroughly plain and simple-minded woman, honest and open in word and deed, with an uncompromising freedom of speech, and a directness and singleness of purpose, which answer better, even as regards worldly prosperity, than the cunning or the cautious would allow themselves to believe. There was not a bolder talker in all Belford than Mrs. Hollis,

* My friend, Mr. Jerrold, has added still another theatrical association by his inimitable creation of Orange Moll — a pleasant extravagance worthy of Middleton.

who saw in the course of the day people of all ranks, from my lord in his coronet carriage, to the little boys who came for ha'porths or penn'orths of inferior fruits (judiciously preferring the liberality and civility of a great shop to the cheatery and insolence of the inferior chapwoman, who makes money by the poor urchins, and snubs them all the while:) from the county member's wife to the milk-woman's daughter, every body dealt with Mrs. Hollis, and with all of them did Mrs. Hollis chat with a mixture of good-humour and good spirits, of perfect ease and perfect respectfulness, which made her one of the most popular personages in the town. As a gossip she was incomparable. She knew every body and every thing, and every thing about every body; her reports, like her plums, had the bloom on them, and she would as much have scorned to palm upon you an old piece of scandal as to send you strawberries that had been two days gathered. Moreover, considering the vast quantity of chit-chat of which she was the channel, (for it was computed that the whole gossip of Belford passed through her shop once in four-and-twenty hours, like the blood through the heart,) it was really astonishing how authentic, on the whole, her intelligence was; mistakes and mis-statements of course there were, and a plentiful quantity of exaggeration; but of actual falsehood there was comparatively little, and of truth, or of what approached to truth, positively much. If one told a piece of news out of Mrs. Hollis's shop, it was almost an even wager that it was substantially correct. And of what other gossip-shop can one say so much?

Chit-chat, however, eminently as she excelled in it, was not the sort of discourse which our good fruiterer preferred. Her taste lay in higher topics. She was a keen politician, a zealous partisan, a red-hot reformer, and to declaim against taxes and tories, and poor-rates and ministers—subjects which she handled as familiarly as her pippins—was the favourite pastime of our fruiterer. Friend or foe made little difference with this free-spoken lady, except that perhaps she preferred the piquancy of a good-humoured skirmish with a political adversary to the flatness of an agreement with a political ally; and it is saying not a little for tory good-humour, that her antagonists listened and laughed, and bought her grapes and oranges just as quietly after a diatribe of her fashion as before. I rather think that they liked her oratory better than the whigs did—it amused them.*

A contested election turns her and her shop topsy-turvy. One wonders how she lives through the excitement, and how she contrives to obtain and exhibit the state of the poll almost as it seems before the candidates themselves can know the numbers. It even puts her sober-suited attire out of countenance. Green and orange being the colours of her party, she puts on two cockades of that livery, which suit as ill with her costume as they would with that of a Quaker; she hoists a gay flag at her door, and sticks her shop all over with oranges and laurel-leaves, so that it vies in decoration with the member's chair; and in return for this devotion, the band at an election time, make a halt of unusual duration before her door, (to the great inconvenience of the innumerable stage-coaches and other vehicles which pass that well-frequented corner, which by the way is the high road to London,) and the mob, especially that part of it which consists of little boys and girls, with an eye to a dole of nuts or cherries, bestow upon her almost as many cheers as they would inflict upon the candidate himself.

At these times, Mr. Hollis (for there was such a personage, short and thick, and very civil) used to make his appearance in the shop, and to show his adhesion to the cause by giving a plumper to its champion; on other occasions he was seldom visible, having an extensive market-garden to manage in the suburbs of the town, and being for the most part engaged in trotting to and fro between Mount Pleasant and the Church-yard corner, the faithful reporter of his wife's messages and orders. As you might be certain at any given hour to find Mrs. Hollis at her post behind the counter—for little as she looked like a person who lived without eating, she never seemed to retire for the ordinary purposes of breakfast or dinner, and even managed to talk scandal without its usual accompaniment of tea—so sure were you to see her quiet steady husband (one of the best-natured and honestest men in the place) on the full trot from the garden to the shop, or the shop to the garden, with a huge fruit-basket on one arm, and his little grand-daughter, Patty, on the other.

Patty Hollis was the only daughter of our

* As an illustration both of her passion for politics, and of the way in which one is oneself possessed by the subject that happens to be the point of interest at the moment, I cannot help relating an equivoque which occurred between Mrs. Hollis and myself. I had been to London on theatrical business, and called at the shop a day or two after my return, and our little marketing being transacted, and civil inquiries as to the health of the family made and answered, I was going away, when Mrs. Hollis stopped me by asking, "how they were getting on at the two great houses in London?" "Badly enough, I am afraid, Mrs. Hollis," said I. "No doubt, ma'am," responded the lady of the orange-shop; "but what can be expected from such management?" Just then fresh customers entered, and I walked off, wondering what Mrs. Hollis could have heard of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and their respective mismanagements, and how she came to know that I had been tossing in those troubled waters, when all on a sudden it occurred to me, that strange as it seemed for people to talk to me of politics, she must have meant the Houses of Lords and Commons. And so she did.

good fruiterers' only son; and her parents having died in her infancy, she had been reared with the tenderness which is usually bestowed on the only remaining scion of a virtuous and happy family in that rank of life. Her grandfather especially idolized her; made her the constant companion of his many walks to the garden on the side of Mount Pleasant, and installed her, before she was twelve years of age, leader of the fruit-pickers, and superintendent of the gardeners: offices in which she so conducted herself as to give equal satisfaction to the governors and the governed, the prince and the people. Never was vice-queen more popular, or more fortunate, both in her subjects and her territory.

It would have been difficult to find a prettier piece of ground than this market-garden, with its steep slopes and romantic hollows, its groves of fruit-trees, its thickets of berry-bushes, and its carpets of strawberries. Quite shut out from the town by the sudden and precipitous rise of the hill, it opened to a charming view of the Kennet, winding through green meadows, and formed, in itself, with its troop of active labourers, men, women, and girls, a scene of great animation; and during the time of the pearly pear-blossom, the snowy cherry, and the rosy apple-blossom, and, again, in the fruit season, (for, next to flowers, fruit is the prettiest of all things,) a scene of great beauty. There was one barberry-bush, standing by itself, on the top of a knoll of strawberries, which was really a picture.

But by far the most beautiful part of that pleasant scene, was the young fruit-gatherer, Patty Hollis. Her complexion, a deep rich brown, with lips like the fruit of her favourite barberry-tree, and cheeks coloured like damask roses, suited her occupation. It had a sweet sunniness that might have beseemed a vintager, and harmonized excellently with the rich tints of the cherries and currants with which her baskets were so often over-brimmed. She had, too, the clear black eye, with its long lashes, and the dark and glossy hair, which give such brightness to a brown beauty. But the real charm of her countenance was its expression. The smiles, the dimples—the look of sweetness, of innocence, of perfect content, which had been delightful to look upon as a child, were still more delightful, because so much more rare, as she advanced towards womanhood. They seemed, and they were, the result of a character equally charming, frank, gentle, affectionate, and gay.

When about seventeen, this youthful happiness, almost too bright to last, was overclouded by a great misfortune—the death of her kind grandfather. Poor Patty's grateful heart was almost broken. She had lost one who had loved her better than he had loved any thing in the world, or all the world put together; and she felt (as every body does feel on such an occasion, though with far less cause than most of us,) that her own duty and affection had never been half what his fondness for her deserved,—that she had lost her truest and most partial friend, and that she should never be happy again. So deep was her affliction, that Mrs. Hollis, herself much grieved, was obliged to throw aside her own sorrow to comfort her. It was no comfort, but seemed rather an accession of pain, to find that she was what, considering her station, might be called an heiress,—that she would be entitled to some hundreds on her marriage or her coming of age, and that the bulk of the property (accumulated by honest industry and a watchful, but not mean, frugality) was secured to her after the death of her grandmother.

The trustees to the property and executors of the will, who were also joined with Mrs. Hollis in the guardianship of her granddaughter, were our old friend Stephen Lane, his near neighbour and political ally, and another intimate acquaintance, who, although no politician, was a person of great and deserved influence with all those of his own rank who had come in contact with his acuteness and probity.

Andrew Graham* was a Scotch gardener, and one of the very best specimens of a class which unites, in a remarkable degree, honesty, sobriety, shrewdness, and information. Andrew had superadded to his northern education, and an apprenticeship to a duke's gardener, the experience of eight years passed as foreman in one of the great nurseries near London: so that his idiom, if not his accent,† was almost entirely Anglicised; and when he came to Belford to superintend the garden and hothouses of a very kind and very intelligent gentleman, who preferred spending the

* Of a northern clan, I fancy—not one of those Grahams of the "land debateable," to whom I have the honour of being distantly related, and of whom the Great Minstrel tells, that they stole with a laudable impartiality from both sides of the border. Speaking of the old harper, Albert Græme, Sir Walter says,

> "Well friended, too, this hardy kin,
> Whoever lost, were sure to win;
> They sought the beeves that made their broth
> In Scotland and in England both."
>
> *Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

† The accent is not so easily got quit of. A true-born Scot rarely loses that mark of his country, let him live ever so long on this side of the Tweed; and even a Southern sometimes finds it sooner learned than unlearned. A gardener of my acquaintance, the head man in a neighbouring nursery-ground, who spoke as good Scotch as heart could desire, and was universally known among the frequenters of the garden by the title of the "Scotchman," happened not only to have been born in Hertfordshire, but never to have travelled farther north than that county. He had worked under a gardener from Aberdeen, and had picked up the dialect. Some people do catch peculiarities of tone. I myself once returned from a visit to Northumberland, speaking the Doric of Tynedale like a native, and, from love of "the north countrie," was really sorry when I lost the pretty imperfection.

superfluities of a large income on horticultural pursuits, rather than in showier and less elegant ways, he brought into the town as long a head and as sound a heart as could be found in the country. To Mr. Hollis (who had himself begun life as a gentleman's gardener, and who thoroughly loved his art) his society was exceedingly welcome; and he judged, and judged rightly, that to no one could he more safely confide the important trust of advising and protecting two comparatively helpless females, than to the two friends whom he had chosen.

Andrew vindicated his good opinion by advising Mrs. Hollis to resign the garden (which was held on lease of our other good friend, Mr. Howard,) dispose of the shop (which was her own,) take a small house in the suburbs, and live on her property; and he urged this the rather as he suspected her foreman of paying frequent visits to a certain beer-house, lately established in the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant, and bearing the insidious sign of "The Jolly Gardener;" and because, as he observed, "when an Englishman turned of fifty once takes to the national vice of tippling, you may as well look to raise pine-apples from cabbage-stocks, as expect him to amend. He 'll go to the Jolly Gardener, and the rest of the lads will follow him, and the garden may take care of itself. Part with the whole concern, my good lady, and ye are safe—keep it, and ye 'll be cheated."

Now this was good advice; and it had the usual fate of good advice, in being instantly and somewhat scornfully rejected. Mrs. Hollis had a high opinion of her foreman, and could not and would not live out of her shop; and as even Patty pleaded for the garden, though she intimated some suspicion of its manager, the whole concern remained *in statu quo*; and Andrew, when he saw the smiles return to her lips, and the bloom to her cheeks, and found how much her health and happiness depended on her spending her days in the open air, and in the employments she loved, ceased to regret that his counsel had not been followed, more especially as the head-man, having more than verified his prediction, had been discharged, and replaced, according to his recommendation, by a young and clever labourer in the garden.

Sooner than Patty had thought it possible, her cheerfulness came back to her; she half lived at Mount Pleasant, did all she could to assist the new head-man, who, although merely a self-taught lad of the neighbourhood, did honour to Andrew's discrimination, and was beginning to discover (the god of love only knows how) that to be, in a small way, an heiress was no insupportable misfortune, when a vexation arising from that very cause almost made her wish herself really the "wild wandering gipsy" which her poor grandfather had delighted to call her.

The calamity in question was no trifle. Poor Patty was unfortunate enough to be courted by Mr. Samuel Vicars, hair-dresser and perfumer, in Bristol-street; and, to add to the trial, the suitor was the especial favourite of her grandmother, and his addresses were supported by all her influence and authority.

Mr. Samuel Vicars was one of those busybodies who are the pests of a country town. To be a gossip is perhaps permitted to the craft, as inheritors of those old privileged disseminators of news and scandal, the almost extinct race of barbers; but to be so tittle-tattling, so mischief-making, and so malicious as Mr. Samuel Vicars, is not allowed to any body; and the universal ill-will which such a style of conversation indicates is pretty certain to be returned in kind. Accordingly, the young gentleman had contrived to gather around himself as comfortable a mixture of contempt and hatred as one would desire to see on a summer's day.

It was a little, pert, dapper personage, as slight and flimsy as his white apron or his linen jacket, with a face in which all that was not curl and whisker was simper and smirk, a sharp conceited voice, and a fluency, which as it might be accounted a main cause of the thousand and one scrapes into which he was perpetually getting, was almost as unlucky for himself as for his hearers. He buzzed about one like a gnat, all noise and sting and motion, and one wondered, as one does in the case of that impertinent insect, how any thing so insignificant could be so troublesome.

Besides the innumerable private quarrels into which his genius for "evil-speaking, lying, and slandering," could not fail to bring him,—quarrels the less easily settled, because having a genuine love of litigation, an actual passion for the importance and excitement of a law-suit, he courted an action for damages, in which he could figure as defendant on the one hand, and blessed his stars for a horse-whipping, in which he shone as plaintiff, on the other; besides these private disputes, he engaged with the most fiery zeal and the fiercest activity in all the public squabbles of the place, and being unhappily, as Stephen Lane used to observe, of *his* party, and a partisan whom it was morally impossible to keep quiet, contrived to be a greater thorn in the side of our worthy friend than all his opponents put together. Woe to the cause which he advocated! The plainest case came out one mass of confusion from the curious infelicity of his statements, and right seemed wrong when seen through the misty medium of his astounding and confounding verbiage. Stephen's contempt for his adherent's orations was pretty much such as a stanch old hound might evince, when some young dog, the babbler of the pack, begins to give tongue;—"But, dang it," cried the good butcher, "he brings the cause into contempt too! It 's

enough to make a man sell himself for a slave," added the poor patriot, in a paroxysm of weariness and indignation, "to hear that chap jabber for three hours about freedom. And the whole world can't stop him. If he would but rat now!" exclaimed the ex-butcher. And, doubtless, Samuel would have ratted, if any body would have made it worth his while; but the other party knew the value of such an opponent, and wisely left him in the ranks of opposition, to serve their cause by speaking against it; so Mr. Samuel Vicars continued a Reformer.

It was this circumstance that first recommended him to the notice of Mrs. Hollis, who, herself a perfectly honest and true-hearted woman, took for granted that Samuel was veracious and single-minded as herself, believed all his puffs of his own speeches, and got nearer to thinking him, what he thought himself, a very clever fellow, than any other person whom he had ever honoured by his acquaintance. Besides the political sympathy, they had one grand tie in a common antipathy. A certain Mrs. Deborah Dean, long a greengrocer in the Butts, and even then taking higher ground than Mrs. Hollis thought at all proper, had recently entered into partnership with a nursery-man, and had opened a magnificent store for seeds, plants, fruit, and vegetables, in Queen-street; and, although the increasing size of Belford, and the crowded population of the neighbourhood, were such as really demanded another shop, and that at the corner of the church-yard continued to have even more customers than its mistress could well manage, yet she had reigned too long over all the fruitage of the town to "bear a *sister* near the throne;" and she hated Mrs. Deborah (who, besides, was a "blue") with a hatred truly feminine—hot, angry, and abusive; and the offending party being, as it happened, a mild, civil, unoffending woman, poor Mrs. Hollis had had the misfortune to find nobody ready to join in speaking ill of her, until she encountered Samuel Vicars, who poured the whole force of his vituperative eloquence on the unfortunate dame. Now, Samuel, who had had some pecuniary dealings with her whilst she lived in his neighbourhood—certain barterings of cabbages, celery, carrots, and French beans, against combs and tooth-brushes, and a Parisian front, which had led first to a disputed account, and then to the catastrophe in which he most delighted, a law-suit,—was charmed, on his side, to meet with what seldom came in his way, a sympathizing listener. He called every day to descant on the dear subject, and feed Mrs. Hollis's hatred with fresh accounts of her rival's insolence and prosperity; and, in the course of his daily visits, it occurred to him that she was well to do in the world, and that he could not do a better thing than to cast the eyes of affection on her pretty grand-daughter.

Samuel's own affairs were exceedingly in want of a rich wife. What with running after *la chose publique*, and neglecting his own affairs, — what with the friends that he lost and the enemies that he gained by the use of that mischievous weapon, his tongue—to say nothing of the many law-suits in which he was cast, and those scarcely less expensive that he won — his concerns were in as much disorder as if he had been a lord. A hairdresser's is, at the best, a meagre business, especially in a country town, and his had declined so much, that his one apprentice, an idle lad of fourteen, and the three or four painted figures, on which his female wigs were stuck in the windows, had the large showy shop, with its stock of glittering trumpery, pretty much to themselves; so that Samuel began to pay most assiduous court, not to his fair intended, — for, pretty girl as Patty was, our Narcissus of the curling-irons was far too much enamoured of himself to dream of falling in love with a pair of cherry cheeks,—but to her grandmother; and having picked up at the Jolly Gardener certain rumours of Mount Pleasant, which he related to his patroness with much of bitterness and exaggeration, awakened such a tempest of wrath in her bosom, that she wrote a letter to Mr. Howard, giving him notice that in six months she should relinquish the garden, discharged her new foreman on the spot, and ordered Patty to prepare to marry the hairdresser without let or delay.

Poor Patty! her only consolation was in her guardians. Her first thought was of Andrew, but *he* was sure to have the evil tidings from another quarter; besides, of him there could be no doubt; her only fear was of Stephen Lane. So, as soon as she could escape from the Padrona's scolding, and wipe the tears from her own bright eyes, she set forth for the great shop in the Butts.

"Well, my rosebud!" said the good butcher, kindly chucking his fair ward under the chin; "what's the news with you? Why, you are as great a stranger as strawberries at Christmas! I thought you had taken root at Mount Pleasant, and never meant to set foot in the town again."

"Oh, Mr. Lane!"—began poor Patty, and then her courage failed her, and she stopped suddenly and looked down abashed;—"Oh! Mr. Lane!"——

"Well, what's the matter?" inquired her kind guardian; "are you going to be married, and come to ask my consent?"

"Oh, Mr. Lane!" again sighed Patty.

"Out with it, lass! — never fear!" quoth Stephen.

"Oh, Mr. Lane!" once more cried the damsel, stopping as if spell-bound, and blushing to her fingers' ends.

"Well, Patty, if you can't speak to a friend that has dandled you in his arms, and your

father before you, you'd best send the lad to see what he can say for himself. I shan't be cruel, I promise you. Though you might do better in the way of money, I would rather look to character. That 's what tells in the long run, and I like the chap."

"Oh, Mr. Lane, God forbid!" exclaimed Patty; "my grandmother wants me to marry Samuel Vicars!"

"Sam Vicars! the woman 's mad!" ejaculated Stephen.

"She cannot be other than demented," observed Andrew, who had just entered the shop, "for she has discharged William Reid, — the steadiest and cleverest lad that ever came about a garden, a lad who might be taken for a Scotchman,—and wants to marry Miss Patty to a loon of a hairdresser."

"Whom any body would take for a Frenchman," interrupted the butcher; and having thus summed up the characters of the two rivals in a manner that did honour no less to their warm feelings than to their strong prejudices, the two guardians and their fair ward, much comforted by the turn the conversation had taken, began to consult as to their future proceedings.

"She must give up the garden, since she has given notice," quoth Andrew; "but that won't much signify. This is only the beginning of January, but Christmas being passed, the notice will date only from Lady-day, so that she 'll keep it till Michaelmas, and will have plenty of opportunity to miss William Reid's care and skill, and honesty—"

"But poor William, what will become of him?" interposed his fair mistress: "William to be turned away at a day's warning, like a drunkard or a thief! What will he do?"

"Just as a very industrious and very clever gardener always does. He 'll prosper, depend upon it. And, besides, my dear, to tell ye a bit of a secret, your good friend Mr. Howard, who likes William so well, has given him an acre and a half of his cottage allotments, in capital order, and partly stocked, which happened to fall vacant just as it was wanted. And you must wait quietly, my bonny lass, and see what time will do for ye. William 's three-and-twenty, and ye are nineteen,—ye have a long life before ye—wait and see what 'll turn up. Mr. Howard is one of the best men in the world, although he has the ill-luck to be a tory," pursued Andrew, with a sly glance at Stephen.

"Never a better, although he had the ill luck to be born on the south of the Tweed," responded Stephen, returning the glance.

"Mr. Howard is your stanch friend," pursued Andrew; "and as for your grandmother, she 's a good woman too, and will soon be sick of that jackanapes, if she be only left to find him out herself. So go home, my bonny doo, and be comforted," said the kind-hearted Scotchman, patting the round cheek to which the colour and the dimples were returning under the reviving influence of hope.

"Ay, get along home, rosebud," added the equally kind Englishman, chucking her under the chin, and giving her a fatherly kiss, "get along home, for fear they should miss you. And, as to being married to that whipper-snapper with his curls and his whiskers, why, if I saw the slightest chance of such a thing, I 'd take him up between my finger and thumb, and pitch him up to the top of St. Stephen's tower before you could say Jack Robinson! Get along, rosebud! I 'll not see thee made unhappy, I promise thee."

And, much consoled by these kind promises, poor Patty stole back to the little shop at the corner of the church-yard.

The winter, the spring, and the summer, crept slowly by, bringing with them a gradual melioration of prospect to our nutbrown maid. Time, as Andrew had predicted, had done much to sicken Mrs. Hollis of the proposed alliance. Her honest and simple nature, and her real goodness of heart, soon revolted at his bitterness and malice, and enduring enmities. Her animosities, which vanished almost as she gave them utterance, had no sympathy with such eternity of hatred. Even her rival and competitor, Mrs. Dean, had been forgiven, as soon as she discovered that the world (even the little world of Belford) had room enough for both, and that, by adding the superior sorts of vegetables to her stock, with the very finest of which she was supplied through the medium of Andrew Graham, she had even increased the number of her customers and the value of her business, which, in spite of her having given notice of quitting the garden, (a measure which Patty suspected her of regretting,) she had determined to continue. She was weary, too, of his frivolity, his idleness, and his lies, and having taken upon her to lecture him on his several sins of gadding, tattling, meddle-making, and so forth, even intimating some distrust of his oratorical powers and his political importance, Mr. Samuel began to be nearly as tired of his patroness as his patroness was of him; so that, although no formal breach had taken place, Patty felt herself nearly rid of that annoyance.

In the mean while, a new attraction, particularly interesting to the gardening world, had arisen in Belford, in the shape of a Horticultural Society. Nothing could be more beautiful than the monthly shows of prize flowers, fruits, and vegetables, in the splendid Town-hall. All the county attended them, and our country belles never showed to so much advantage as side by side by their rivals the flowers, giving themselves up with their whole hearts to a delighted admiration of the loveliest productions of Nature. Andrew Graham was of course one of the most successful competitors, and Mr. Howard one of

the most zealous and intelligent patrons of the society, whilst even our friend Stephen took some concern in the matter, declaring that good cabbage was no bad accompaniment to good beef, and that all the wearers of blue aprons, whether butcher or gardener, had a claim to his affection—a classification at which Andrew, who had a high veneration for the dignity of his art, was not a little scandalized. Patty from the first had been an enthusiastic admirer of the whole plan, and Mrs. Hollis had been bribed into liking it, (for old people do not spontaneously take to novelties, especially in their own pursuits,) by the assurance of Andrew that the choice fruit and vegetables, the rare Carolina beans and green Indian-corn—the peas and strawberries so very early and so very late, so large of size and delicate of flavour—the lettuces and cauliflowers unmatched in whiteness and firmness, and a certain new melon which combined all the merits of all the melons hitherto known, came exclusively from one of the prize exhibitors of the horticultural meeting, and should be reserved exclusively for her, if she desired to purchase them. Farther Mrs. Hollis was too discreet to inquire. There are secrets in all trades, and none are more delicate than those regarding the supply of a great fruit-shop. She knew that they did not come from Andrew, for his character set suspicion at defiance; but all his friends might not be equally scrupulous. Silence was safest.

So much had Patty been delighted with the prize-shows, all of which she attended, as was permitted to respectable trades-people in the afternoon when the gentry had returned home to dinner, that she had actually excited in Mrs. Hollis a desire to go with her, and at every meeting the expedition had been threatened, but had gone off, on the score of weather, or of illness, or of business—or, in short, any one of the many excuses which people who seldom go out make to themselves to avoid the exertion, so that the last day arrived and "Yarrow" was still "unvisited." But that it was the last was a powerful plea with Patty, whose importunity, seconded by a bright sunshiny September evening, and by the gallantry of Mr. Lane, who arrived dressed in his best blue coat and red waistcoat on purpose to escort her, proved irresistible; and Mrs. Hollis, leaving the shop in charge of a trusty maid-servant, an alert shopboy, and a sedate and civil neighbour, (a sort of triple guardianship which she considered necessary to supply her own single presence,) gave to the inhabitants of Belford the great and unprecedented novelty of seeing her in the streets on a week-day. The people of Thibet would hardly be more astonished at the sight of the Dalai Lama.

On reaching the Town-hall, she was struck even as much as she intended to be with the fragrance and beauty of the hothouse plants, the pines, grapes, peaches, and jars of flowers from the gardens of the gentlemen's seats in the neighbourhood, shown as they were with all the advantages of tasteful arrangement and the magical effect of the evening light. "What a many flowers have been *invented* since I was young!" was her natural thought, clothed in the very words in which it passed through her mind.

She turned, however, from the long rows in which the contributions of the members had been piled, to some smaller tables at the top of the room, filled with the productions of cottage exhibitors. One of these standing a little apart was understood to be appropriated to an individual of this description, a half-taught labourer tilling his own spot of ground, who had never in his life worked in any thing beyond a common market-garden, but who had won almost every prize for which he had contended—had snatched the prizes not only from competitors of his own class, but from the gardeners of the nobility and gentry—had, in short, beaten every body, even Andrew Graham. To this table Mrs. Hollis turned with peculiar interest—an interest not diminished when she beheld there piled with a picturesqueness that looked as if copied from Van Huysum; the identical green Indian-corn, Carolina beans, the lettuces and cauliflowers, the late peas and autumnal strawberries, and the newest and best of all possible melons, with which she had been so mysteriously supplied, flanked by two jars of incomparable dahlias, and backed by a large white rose, delicate and regular as the *rose de Meaux*, and two seedling geraniums of admirable beauty, labelled 'The Mount Pleasant' and 'The Patty.' By the side of the table stood Andrew Graham, Mr. Howard, and William Reid.

"The lad has beaten me, Mrs. Hollis, but I forgive him," quoth our friend Andrew, smiling; "I told ye that his wares were the best in the market."

"And you must forgive me, Mrs. Hollis, for having made him your successor in the Mount Pleasant garden," said Mr. Howard. "I have been building a pretty cottage there for him and his wife, when he is fortunate enough to get one; and now that I see you do get out sometimes, if you would but come and see it—"

"And if you would but let me give away the bride"—added honest Stephen, seizing Patty's hand, while the tears ran down her cheeks like rain.

"And if you would but let me manage the garden for you, Mrs. Hollis, and be as a son to you"—said William, pleadingly.

And vanquished at once by natural feeling and professional taste—for the peas, melons, and strawberries, had taken possession of her very heart,—Mrs. Hollis yielded. In less than

a month the young couple were married, and the very next day Mr. Samuel Vicars ran away from his creditors, whom till then he had pacified by the expectation of his making a wealthy match, and was never heard of in Belford again.

BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM.

THE WILL.

I NOW proceed to record some of the most aristocratic belles of the Belford assemblies, the young ladies of the neighbourhood, who, if not prettier than their compeers of the town, were at least more fashionable and more admired.

Nothing in the whole routine of country life seems to me more capricious and unaccountable than the choice of a county beauty. Every shire in the kingdom, from Brobdignaggian York to Lilliputian Rutland, can boast of one. The existence of such a personage seems as essential to the well-being of a provincial community as that of the queen-bee in a hive; and except by some rare accident, when two fair sisters, for instance, of nearly equal pretensions appear in similar dresses at the same balls and the same archery meetings, you as seldom see two queens of Brentford in the one society as the other. Both are elective monarchies, and both tolerably despotic; but so far I must say for the little winged people, that one comprehends the impulse which guides them in the choice of a sovereign far better than the motives which influence their brother-insects, the beaux: and the reason of this superior sagacity in the lesser swarms is obvious. With them the election rests in a natural instinct, an unerring sense of fitness, which never fails to discover with admirable discrimination the one only she who suits their purpose; whilst the other set of voluntary subjects, the plumeless bipeds, are unluckily abandoned to their own wild will, and, although from long habits of imitation almost as unanimous as the bees, seem guided in their admiration by the merest caprice, the veriest chance, and select their goddess, the goddess of beauty, blindfold—as the Bluecoat boys draw, or used to draw, the tickets in a lottery.

Nothing is so difficult to define as the customary qualification of the belle of a country assembly. Face or figure it certainly is not; for take a stranger into the room, and it is at least two to one but he will fix on twenty damsels prettier than the county queen; nor, to do the young gentlemen justice, is it fortune or connexion; for, so as the lady come within the prescribed limits of county gentility, (which, by the way, are sufficiently arbitrary and exclusive,) nothing more is required in a beauty—whatever might be expected in a wife; fortune it is not, still less is it rank, and least of all accomplishments. In short, it seems to me equally difficult to define what is the requisite and what is not; for, on looking back through twenty years to the successive belles of the Belford balls, I cannot fix on any one definite qualification. One damsel seemed to me chosen for gaiety and good-humour, a merry, laughing girl; another for haughtiness and airs; one because her father was hospitable, another because her mother was pleasant; one became fashionable because related to a fashionable poet, whilst another stood on her own independent merits as one of the boldest riders in the hunt, and earned her popularity at night by her exploits in the morning.

Among the whole list, the one who commanded the most universal admiration, and seemed to me to approach nearest to the common notion of a pretty woman, was the high-born and graceful Constance Lisle. Besides being a tall, elegant figure, with finely chiselled features and a pale but delicate complexion, relieved by large dark eyes, full of sensibility, and a profusion of glossy black hair, her whole air and person were eminently distinguished by that undefinable look of fashion and high breeding, that indisputable stamp of superiority, which, for want of a better word, we are content to call style. Her manners were in admirable keeping with her appearance. Gentle, gracious, and self-possessed; courteous to all and courting none, she received the flattery, to which she had been accustomed from her cradle, as mere words of course, and stimulated the ardour of her admirers by her calm non-notice, infinitely more than a finished coquette would have done by all the *agaceries* of the most consummate vanity.

Nothing is commoner than the affectation of indifference. But the indifference of Miss Lisle was so obviously genuine, that the most superficial coxcomb that buzzed around her could hardly suspect its reality. She heeded admiration no more than that queen of the garden, the lady lily, whom she so much resembled in modest dignity. It played around her as the sunny air of June around the snow-white flower, her common and natural atmosphere.

This was, perhaps, one reason for the number of beaux who fluttered round Constance. It puzzled and piqued them. They were unused to be of so little consequence to a young lady, and could not make it out. Another cause might, perhaps, be found in the splendid fortune which she inherited from her mother, and which, independently of her expectations from her father, rendered her the greatest match and richest heiress in the county.

Richard Lisle, her father, a second son of the ancient family of Lisle of Lisle-End, had

been one of those men born, as it seems, to fortune, with whom every undertaking prospers through a busy life. Of an ardent and enterprising temper, at once impetuous and obstinate, he had mortally offended his father and elder brother by refusing to take orders, and to accept, in due season, the family livings, which, time out of mind, had been the provision of the second sons of their illustrious house. Rejected by his relations, he had gone out as an adventurer to India, had been taken into favour by the head-partner of a great commercial house, married his daughter, entered the civil service of the Company, been resident at the court of one native prince and governor of the forfeited territory of another, had accumulated wealth through all the various means by which, in India, money has been found to make money, and finally returned to England a widower, with an only daughter, and one of the largest fortunes ever brought from the gorgeous East.

Very different had been the destiny of the family at home. Old Sir Rowland Lisle, (for the name was to be found in one of the earliest pages of the Baronetage,) an expensive, ostentatious man, proud of his old ancestry, of his old place, and of his old English hospitality, was exactly the person to involve any estate, however large its amount; and, when two contests for the county had brought in their train debt and mortgages, and he had recourse to horse-racing and hazard to deaden the sense of his previous imprudence, nobody was astonished to find him dying of grief and shame, a heart-broken and almost ruined man.

His eldest son, Sir Everard, was perfectly free from either of these destructive vices; but he, besides an abundant portion of irritability, obstinacy, and family pride, had one quality quite as fatal to the chance of redeeming his embarrassed fortunes as the electioneering and gambling propensities of his father — to wit, a love of litigation so strong and predominant that it assumed the form of a passion.

He plunged at once into incessant law-suits with creditor and neighbour, and, in despite of the successive remonstrances of his wife, a high-born and gentle-spirited woman, who died a few years after their marriage,—of his daughter, a strong-minded girl, who, moderately provided for by a female relation, married at eighteen a respectable clergyman,— and of his son, a young man of remarkable promise still at college,—he had contrived, by the time his brother returned from India, not only to mortgage nearly the whole of his estate, but to get into dispute or litigation with almost every gentleman for ten miles round.

The arrival of the governor afforded some ground of hope to the few remaining friends of the family. He was known to be a man of sense and probity, and by no means deficient in pride after his own fashion; and no one doubted but a reconciliation would take place, and a part of the nabob's rupees be applied to the restoration of the fallen glories of Lisle-End. With that object in view, a distant relation contrived to produce a seemingly accidental interview at his own house between the two brothers, who had had no sort of intercourse, except an interchange of cold letters on their father's death since the hour of their separation.

Never was mediation more completely unsuccessful. They met as cold and reluctant friends; they parted as confirmed and bitter enemies. Both, of course, were to blame; and equally, of course, each laid the blame on the other. Perhaps the governor's intentions might be the kindest. Undoubtedly his manner was the worst: for, scolding, haranguing, and laying down the law, as he had been accustomed to do in India, he at once offered to send his nephew abroad with the certainty of accumulating an ample fortune, and to relieve his brother's estate from mortgage, and allow him a handsome income on the small condition of taking possession himself of the family mansion and the family property—a proposal coldly and stiffly refused by the elder brother, who, without deigning to notice the second proposition, declined his son's entering into the service of a commercial company, much in the spirit and almost in the words of Rob Roy, when the good Baillie Nicol Jarvie proposed to apprentice his hopeful offspring to the mechanical occupation of a weaver. The real misfortune of the interview was, that the parties were too much alike, both proud, both irritable, both obstinate, and both too much accustomed to deal chiefly with their inferiors.

The negotiation failed completely; but the governor, clinging to his native place with a mixed feeling, compounded of love for the spot and hatred to its proprietor, purchased at an exorbitant price an estate close at hand, built a villa, and laid out grounds with the usual magnificence of an Indian, bought every acre of land that came under sale for miles around, was shrewdly suspected of having secured some of Sir Everard's numerous mortgages, and, in short, proceeded to invest Lisle-End just as formally as the besieging army sat down before the citadel of Antwerp. He spared no pains to annoy his enemy; defended all the actions brought by his brother, the lord of many manors, against trespassers and poachers; disputed his motions at the vestry; quarrelled with his decisions on the bench; turned whig because Sir Everard was a tory; and set the whole parish and half the county by the ears by his incessant squabbles.

Amongst the gentry, his splendid hospitality, his charming daughter, and the exceeding unpopularity of his adversary, who, at one time or other, had been at law with nearly all of them, commanded many partisans. But

the common people, frequently great sticklers for hereditary right, adhered for the most part to the cause of their landlord—ay, even those with whom he had been disputing all his life long. This might be partly ascribed to their universal love for the young squire Henry, whose influence among the poor fairly balanced that of Constance among the rich; but the chief cause was certainly to be found in the character of the governor himself.

At first it seemed a fine thing to have obtained so powerful a champion in every little scrape. They found, however, and pretty quickly, that in gaining this new and magnificent protector they had also gained a master. Obedience was a necessary of life to our Indian, who, although he talked about liberty and equality, and so forth, and looked on them abstractedly as excellent things, had no very exact practical idea of their operation, and claimed in England the same "awful rule and just supremacy" which he had exercised in the East. Every thing must bend to his sovereign will and pleasure, from the laws of cricket to the laws of the land; so that the sturdy farmers were beginning to grumble, and his *protégés*, the poachers, to rebel, when the sudden death of Sir Everard put an immediate stop to his operations and his enmity.

For the new Sir Henry, a young man beloved by every body, studious and thoughtful, but most amiably gentle and kind, his uncle had always entertained an involuntary respect —a respect due at once to his admirable conduct and his high-toned and interesting character. They knew each other by sight, but had never met until a few days after the funeral, when the governor repaired to Lisle-End in deep mourning, shook his nephew heartily by the hand, condoled with him on his loss, begged to know in what way he could be of service to him, and finally renewed the offer to send him out to India, with the same advantages that would have attended his own son, which he had previously made to Sir Everard. The young heir thanked him with that smile, rather tender than glad, which gave its sweet expression to his countenance, sighed deeply, and put into his hands a letter 'which he had found,' he said, 'amongst his poor father's papers, and which must be taken for his answer to his uncle's generous and too tempting offers.'

"You refuse me, then?" asked the governor.

"Read that letter, and tell me if I can do otherwise. Only read that letter," resumed Sir Henry; and his uncle, curbing with some difficulty his natural impatience, opened and read the paper.

It was a letter from a dying father to a beloved son, conjuring him by the duty he had ever shown to obey his last injunction, and neither to sell, let, alienate, nor leave Lisle-End; to preserve the estate entire and undiminished so long as the rent sufficed to pay the interest of the mortgages; and to live among his old tenantry in his own old halls so long as the ancient structure would yield him shelter. "Do this, my beloved son," pursued the letter, "and take your father's tenderest blessing; and believe that a higher blessing will follow on the sacrifice of interest, ambition, and worldly enterprise, to the will of a dying parent. You have obeyed my injunctions living — do not scorn them dead. Again and again I bless you, prime solace of a life of struggle — my dear, my dutiful son!"

"Could I disobey?" inquired Sir Henry, as his uncle returned him the letter; "could it even be a question?"

"No!" replied the governor, peevishly. "But to mew you up with the deer and pheasants in this wild oak park, to immure a fine spirited lad in this huge old mansion along with family pictures and suits of armour, and all for a whim, a crotchet, which can answer no purpose upon earth—it 's enough to drive a man mad!"

"It will not be for long," returned Sir Henry, gently. "Short as it is, my race is almost run. And then, thanks to the unbroken entail—the entail which I never could prevail to have broken, when it might have spared *him* so much misery—the park, mansion, and estate, even the old armour and the family pictures, will pass into much better hands—into yours. Lisle-End will once more flourish in splendour and in hospitality."

The young baronet smiled as he said this; but the governor, looking on his tall, slender figure, and pallid cheek, felt that it was likely to be true, and, wringing his hand in silence, was about to depart, when Sir Henry begged him to remain a moment longer.

"I have still one favour to beg of you, my dear uncle — one favour which I may beg. When last I saw Miss Lisle at the house of my sister Mrs. Beauchamp, (for I have twice accidentally had the happiness to meet her there,) she expressed a wish that you had such a piece of water in your grounds as that at the east end of the park, which luckily adjoins your demesne. She would like, she said, a pleasure-vessel on that pretty lake. Now, I may not sell, or let, or alienate—but surely I may lend. And if you will accept this key, and she will deign to use as her own the Lisle-End mere, I need not, I trust, say how sacred from all intrusion from me or mine the spot would prove, or how honoured I should feel myself if it could contribute, however slightly, to her pleasure. Will you tell her this?"

"You had better come and tell her yourself."

"No! Oh no!"

"Well, then, I suppose I must."

And the governor went slowly home whistling, not "for want of thought," but as a fre-

quent custom of his when any thing vexed him.

About a month after this conversation, the father and daughter were walking through a narrow piece of woodland, which divided the highly ornamented gardens of the governor, with their miles of gravel-walks and acres of American borders, from the magnificent park of Lisle-End. The scene was beautiful, and the weather, a sunny day in early May, showed the landscape to an advantage belonging, perhaps, to no other season: on the one hand, the gorgeous shrubs, trees, and young plantations of the new place, the larch in its tenderest green, lilacs, laburnums, and horse-chestnuts, in their flowery glory, and the villa, with its irregular and oriental architecture, rising above all; on the other, the magnificent oaks and beeches of the park, now stretching into avenues, now clumped on its swelling lawns, (for the ground was remarkable for its inequality of surface,) now reflected in the clear water of the lake, into which the woods sometimes advanced in mimic promontories, receding again into tiny bays, by the side of which the dappled deer lay in herds beneath the old thorns; whilst, on an eminence, at a considerable distance, the mansion, a magnificent structure of Elizabeth's day, with its gable-ends and clustered chimneys, stood silent and majestic as a pyramid in the desert. The spot on which they stood had a character of extraordinary beauty, and yet different from either scene. It was a wild glen, through which an irregular footpath led to the small gate in the park, of which Sir Henry had sent Constance the key; the shelving banks on either side clothed with furze in the fullest blossom, which scented the air with its rich fragrance, and would almost have dazzled the eye with its golden lustre but for a few scattered firs and hollies, and some straggling clumps of the feathery birch. The nightingales were singing around, the wood-pigeons cooing overhead, and the father and daughter passed slowly and silently along, as if engrossed by the sweetness of the morning and the loveliness of the scene.

They were thinking of nothing less; as was proved by the first question of the governor, who, always impatient of any pause in conversation, demanded of his daughter "what answer he was to return to the offer of Lord Fitzallan."

"A courteous refusal, my dear father, if you please," answered Constance.

"But I do not please," replied her father, with his crossest whistle. "Here you say No! and No! and No! to every body, instead of marrying some one or other of these young men who flock round you, and giving me the comfort of seeing a family of grandchildren about me in my old age. No to this lord! and No to that! I verily believe, Constance, that you mean to die an old maid."

"I do not expect to live to be an old maid," sighed Constance; "but nothing is so unlikely as my marrying."

"Whew!" ejaculated the governor. "So she means to die as well as her cousin! What has put that notion into your head, Constance? Are you ill?"

"Not particularly," replied the daughter. "But yet I am persuaded that my life will be a short one. And so, my dear father, as you told me the other day that now that I am of age I ought to make my will, I have just been following your advice."

"Oh! that accounts for your thinking of dying. Every body after first making a will expects not to survive above a week or two. I did not, myself, I remember, some forty years ago, when, having scraped a few hundreds together, I thought it a duty to leave them to somebody. But I got used to the operation as I became richer and older. Well, Constance! you have a pretty little fortune to bequeath — about three hundred thousand pounds, as I take it. What have you done with your money?—not left it to me, I hope?"

"No, dear father, you desired me not."

"That's right. But whom have you made your heir? Your maid, Nannette? or your lap-dog, Fido?—they are your prime pets—or the County Hospital? or the Literary Fund? or the National Gallery? or the British Museum?—eh, Constance?"

"None of these, my dear father. I have left my property where it will certainly be useful; and, I think, well used—to my cousin Henry of Lisle-End."

"Her cousin Henry of Lisle-End?" re-echoed the father, smiling, and then sending forth a short loud whistle, eloquent of pleasure and astonishment. "So, so! Her cousin Henry!"

"But keep my secret, I conjure you, dear father?" pursued Constance, eagerly.

"Her cousin Henry!" said the governor to himself, sitting down on the side of the bank to calculate: "her cousin Henry! And she may be queen of Lisle-End as this key proves, queen of the lake, and the land, and the land's master. And the three hundred thousand pounds will more than clear away the mortgages, and I can take care of her jointure and the younger children. I like your choice exceedingly, Constance," continued her father, drawing her to him on the bank.

"Oh, my dear father, I beseech you keep my secret!"

"Yes, yes, we 'll keep the secret quite as long as it shall be necessary. Don't blush so, my charmer, for you have no need. Let me see—there must be a six months' mourning — but the preparations may be going on just the same. And in spite of my foolish brother and his foolish will, my Constance will be lady of Lisle-End."

And within six months the wedding did

take place; and if there could be a happier person than the young bridegroom or his lovely bride, it was the despotic but kind-hearted governor.

THE GREEK PLAYS.

After speaking of the excellent air and healthy situation of Belford, as well as its central position with regard to Bath, Southampton, Brighton, and Oxford, and its convenient distance from the metropolis, the fact of its abounding in boarding-schools might almost be assumed; since in a country-town with these recommendations you are as sure to find a colony of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, as you are to meet with a rookery in a grove of oaks. It is the natural habitation of the species.

Accordingly, all the principal streets in Belford, especially the different entrances to the town, were furnished with classical, commercial, and mathematical academies for young gentlemen, or polite seminaries for young ladies. Showy and spacious-looking mansions they were for the most part, generally a little removed from the high road, and garnished with the captivating titles of Clarence House, Sussex House, York House, and Gloucester House; it being, as every one knows, the approved fashion of the loyal fraternity of schoolmasters to call their respective residences after one or other of the princes, dead or alive, of the royal House of Brunswick. Not a hundred yards could you walk, without stumbling on some such rural academy; and you could hardly proceed half a mile on any of the main roads, without encountering a train of twenty or thirty prim misses, arranged in orderly couplets like steps in a ladder, beginning with the shortest, and followed by two or three demure and neatly-arrayed governesses; or some more irregular procession of straggling boys, for whom the wide footpath was all too narrow, some loitering behind, some scampering before — some straying on one side, some on the other — dirty, merry, untidy and unruly, as if Eton,* or Westminster, or the London University itself had the honour of their education; nay, if you chanced to pass the Lancasterian School, or the National School, towards four in the evening, or twelve at noon, you might not only witness the turbulent outpouring of that most boisterous mob of small people, with a fair prospect of being yourself knocked down, or at best of upsetting some urchin in the rush, (the chance of playing knocker or knockee being almost even;) but might also, if curious in such matters, have an opportunity of deciding whether the Dissenters under Mr. Lancaster's system, or the Church of England children under Dr. Bell's, succeeded best in producing a given quantity of noise, and whether the din of shouting boys or the clamour of squalling girls, in the ecstatic uproariousness of their release from the school-room, be the more intolerable to ears of any delicacy.

Besides these comparatively modern establishments for education, Belford boasted two of those old picturesque foundations, a blue-coat school for boys, and a green-school for girls, — proofs of the charity and piety of our ancestors, who, on the abolition of monasteries, so frequently bestowed their posthumous bounty on endowments for the godly bringing up of poor children, and whose munificence, if less extended in the numbers taught, was so much more comprehensive and complete with regard to the selected objects; including not only bed and board, and lodging and clothing during the period of instruction, but even apprentice fees for placing them out when they had been taught the simple and useful knowledge which their benefactors thought necessary. For my own part, I confess myself somewhat old-fashioned in these matters, and admitting the necessity of as wide a diffusion of education as possible, cannot help entertaining a strong predilection for these limited and orderly charity-schools, where good principles and good conduct, and the value of character, both in the children and their teachers, form the first consideration. I certainly do not like them the less for the pleasant associations belonging to their picturesque old-fashioned dress—the long-waisted bodies and petticoat-like skirt of the blue-coat boys, their round tasselled caps, and monkish leathern girdles; or the little green stuff gowns of the girls, with their snow-white tippets, their bibs and aprons, and mobs. I know nothing prettier than to view on a Sunday morning the train of these primitive-looking little maidens, (the children of "Mr. West's charity") pacing demurely down the steps of their equally picturesque and old-fashioned dwelling, on their way to church, the house itself a complete relique of the domestic architecture of Elizabeth's day, in excellent preservation, and the deep bay-windows adorned with geraniums (the only modern things about the place,) which even my kind friend, Mr. Foster† need not be ashamed

* Every body remembers the poet Gray's description of the youthful members of the aristocracy, the future peers and incipient senators at Eton: "dirty boys playing at cricket."

† Edward Foster, Esq. of Clewer. — Mr. Foster is, perhaps, I may say certainly, the greatest geranium grower in England. That his gardener wins the head prizes, wherever his master deems the competition worthy of his notice, is little; — his commonest geraniums would bear away the meed from any of his rivals — although commonest is the wrong word, since his flowers are all, so to say, original — being seedlings raised by himself, or by his brother Captain Foster.

to own. I doubt if any body else in the county could surpass them.

But the school of schools in Belford, that which was pre-eminently called Belford School, of which the town was justly proud, and for which it was justly famous, was a foundation of a far higher class and character, but of nearly the same date with the endowments for boys and girls which I have just mentioned.

Belford School was one of those free grammar-schools which followed almost as a matter of course upon the Reformation, when education, hitherto left chiefly to the monks and monasteries, was taken out of their hands, and placed under the care of the secular clergy;—the master, necessarily in orders, and provided with testimonials and degrees, being chosen by the corporation, who had also the power of sending a certain number of boys, the sons of poor townsmen, for gratuitous instruction, and the privilege of electing off a certain number of boys to scholarships and fellowships at various colleges in Oxford. The master's salary was, as usual, small, and his house large, so that the real remuneration of the gentlemen who conduct these grammar schools —one of which is to be found in almost every great town in England, where the greater part of our professional men and country gentry have been educated, and from whence so many eminent persons have been sent forth — depends almost wholly upon the boarders and day-scholars not on the foundation, whilst the number of boarders is, of course, contingent on the character and learning of the master.

And it was to the high character, the extensive learning, and the well-merited popularity of the late venerable master, that Belford School was indebted for being at one period next, perhaps, to Rugby in point of numbers, and second to none in reputation.

The school was the first thing shown to strangers. Prints of the school hung up in the shops, and engravings and drawings of the same cherished spot might be met in many mansions far and near. East and west, north and south,—in London, in India, abroad and at home, were these pictures seen—frequently accompanied by a fine engraving of the master, whose virtues had endeared to his pupils those boyish recollections which, let poets talk as they will, are but too often recollections of needless privation, repulsed affection, and unrewarded toil.

Belford school was in itself a pretty object —at least, I, who loved it almost as much as if I had been of the sex that learns Greek and Latin, thought it so. It was a spacious dwelling, standing in a nook of the pleasant green called the Forbury, and parted from the church-yard of St. Nicholas by a row of tall old houses, in two or three of which the under-masters lived, and, the Doctor's mansion being overflowing, received boarders, for the purpose of attending the school. There was a little court before the door with four fir-trees, and, at one end, a projecting bay-window, belonging to a very long room, or, rather, gallery, lined with a noble collection of books, several thousand volumes, rich, not merely in classical lore, but in the best editions of the best authors in almost every language.

In the sort of recess formed by this window, the dear Doctor, (the Doctor *par excellence*) generally sat out of school-hours. There he held his levees, or his drawing-rooms (for ladies were by no means excluded,)—finding time, as your very busy (or, in other words, your very *active*) people so often do, to keep up with all the topics of the day, from the gravest politics (and the good Doctor was a keen politician) to the lightest pleasantry. In that long room, too, which would almost have accommodated a mayor's feast, his frequent and numerous dinner-parties were generally held. It was the only apartment in that temple of hospitality large enough to satisfy his own open heart. The guests who had a general invitation to his table would almost have filled it.

His person had an importance and stateliness which answered to the popular notion

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Although so thoroughly independent of any adventitious aid in his own collection, he is yet most kind and generous in the distribution of his own plants, as I can well testify. People are very kind to me in every way, and in nothing kinder than in supplying my little garden with flowers: one kind friend sends me roses, another dahlias, a third heart's ease. Every body is kind to me, but Mr. Foster is kindest of all. Perhaps I may be permitted to transcribe here some trifling lines, accompanied by a still more trifling book, in which I endeavoured, not to repay, but to acknowledge, my obligation for his innumerable favours — favours greatly enhanced by the circumstance of my being personally unknown to my kind and liberal friend.

TO EDWARD FOSTER, ESQ.

OF CLEWER LODGE, SEPT. 1832.

Rich as the lustrous gems which line
With ruddy light the Indian mine;
Bright as the gorgeous birds which fly
Glittering across the Tropic sky;
And various as the beams which pass
To Gothic fanes through storied glass;
In such distinct yet mingling glow,
Foster, thy famed geraniums show,
That scarce Aladdin's magic bowers,
Where trees were gold, and gems were flowers,
(That vision dear to Fancy's eye,)
Can match thy proud reality.

And bounteous of thy flowery store,
My little garden burnished o'er
With thy rich gifts, seems to express
In each bright bloom its thankfulness,—
The usance nature gives for food,
A mute but smiling gratitude!

Ill payment for thy splendid flowers,
This sober-suited book of ours:
And yet in homely guise it shows
Deep love of every flower that blows,
And with kind thanks may haply blend
Kind wishes from an unknown friend.

of a schoolmaster, and certainly contributed to the influence of his manner over his pupils. So most undoubtedly did his fine countenance. It must have been a real punishment to have disturbed the serenity of those pale placid features, or the sweetness of that benevolent smile.

Benevolence was, after all, his prime characteristic. Full of knowledge, of wisdom, and of learning, an admirable schoolmaster,* and exemplary in every relation of life, his singular kindness of heart was his most distinguishing quality. Nothing could ever warp his candour—that candour which is so often the wisest justice, or stifle his charity; and his pardon followed so immediately an offence, or an injury, that people began to think that there was no great merit in such placability—that it was an affair of temperament, and that he forgave because he could not help forgiving—just as another man might have resented. His school was, of course, an unspeakable advantage to the town; but of all the benefits which he daily conferred upon his neighbours, his friends, his pupils, and his family, by very far the greatest was his example.

If he were beloved by his pupils, his sweet and excellent wife was almost idolized. Lovelier in middle age than the lovely daughters (a wreath of living roses) by whom she was surrounded, pure, simple, kind, and true, no human being ever gathered around her more sincere and devoted affection than the charming lady of Belford School. Next to his own dear mother, every boy loved her; and her motherly feeling, her kindness, and her sympathy seemed inexhaustible; she had care and love for all.† There is a portrait of her, too; but it does not do her justice. The pictures that are really like her, are the small Madonnas of Raphael, of which there are two or three in the Stafford Gallery: they have her open forehead, her divine expression, her simple grace. Raphael was one of the few even of the old masters who knew how to paint such women; who could unite such glowing beauty with such transparent purity!

Perhaps, one of the times at which the Doctor was seen to most advantage was on a Sunday afternoon in his own school-room, where, surrounded by his lovely wife, his large and promising family, his pupils and servants, and occasionally by a chosen circle of friends and guests, he was accustomed to perform the evening service, two of the elder boys reading the lessons, and he himself preaching, with an impressiveness which none that ever heard him can forget, those doctrines of peace and good-will, of holiness, and of charity, of which his whole life was an illustration.

It is, however, a scene of a different nature that I have undertaken to chronicle; and I must hasten to record, so far as an unlettered woman may achieve that presumptuous task, the triumphs of Sophocles and Euripides on the boards of Belford School.

The foundation was subject to a triennial visitation of the Heads of some of the Houses at Oxford, for the purpose of examining the pupils, and receiving those elected to scholarships in their respective colleges; and the examination had been formerly accompanied, as is usual, by Greek and Latin recitations, prize-poems, speeches, &c.; but about thirty years back it occurred to the good Doctor, who had a strong love of the drama, knew Shakspeare nearly as well as he knew Homer, and would talk of the old actors, Garrick, Henderson,‡ Mrs. Yates, and Miss Farren, until you could fancy that you had seen them, that a Greek

* "He teacheth best who knoweth best."—*Cary's Pindar.*

† The following lines were written on the lamented death of this most charming and excellent woman:—

Heavy each heart and clouded every eye,
And meeting friends turn half away to sigh;
For she is gone before whose soft control
Sadness and sorrow fled the troubled soul,
For she is gone, whose cheering smiles had power
To speed on pleasure's wing the social hour;
Long shall her thought with friendly greeting blend,
For she is gone who was of all a friend!
Such were her charms as Raphael loved to trace,
Repeat, improve, in each Madonna's face:
The broad fair forehead, the full modest eye,
Cool cheeks, but of the damask rose's dye,
And coral lips that breathed of purity.
Such, but more lovely; far serenely bright
Her sunny spirit shone with living light,
Far, far beyond the narrow bounds of art,—
Hers was the very beauty of the heart,
Beauty that must be loved. The weeping child,
Home-sick and sad, has gazed on her and smiled—
Has heard her voice, and in its gentle sound
Another home, another mother found.
And as she seemed she was: from day to day
Wisdom and virtue marked her peaceful way.
Large was her circle, but the cheerful breast
Spread wide around her happiness and rest.
She had sweet words and pleasant looks for all,
And precious kindness at the mourner's call;
Charity, quick to give and slow to blame,
And lingering still in that unfaded frame,
The fairest, the most fleeting charms of youth,
Bloom of the mind, simplicity and truth;
And, pure Religion, thine eternal light,
Beamed round that brow in mortal beauty bright,
Spake in that voice, soft as the mother-dove,
Found in that gentle breast thy home of love.
So knit she friendship's lovely knot. How well
She filled each tenderer name, no verse can tell;
That last best praise lives in her husband's sigh,
And floating dims her children's glistening eye,
Embalming with fond tears her memory.

‡ Henderson was his favourite. So, from MS. letters in my possession, I find him to have been, with Captain Jephson, the author of the "Count de Narbonne," the "Italian Lover," &c., and the friend both of Garrick and of John Kemble. Intellect seems to have been his remarkable characteristic, and that quality which results from intellect, but does not always belong to it—taste. What an artist must that man have been who played Hamlet and Falstaff on following nights, beating his young competitor, Kemble, in the one part, and his celebrated predecessor, Quin, in the other! His early death was, perhaps, the greatest loss that the stage ever sustained.

drama, well got up, would improve the boys both in the theory and practice of elocution, and in the familiar and critical knowledge of the language; that it would fix their attention and stimulate their industry in a manner far beyond any common tasks or examinations; that it would interest their parents and amuse their friends; that the purity of the Greek tragedies rendered them (unlike the Latin comedies which time has sanctioned at Westminster) unexceptionable for such a purpose; and that a classical exhibition of so high an order would be worthy of his own name in the world of letters, and of the high reputation of his establishment.

Hence arose the Greek plays of Belford School.

Every thing conduced to the success of the experiment. It so happened that the old school-room — not then used for its original destination, as the Doctor had built a spacious apartment for that purpose, closer to his own library — was the very place that a manager would have desired for a theatre; being a very long and large room, communicating at one end with the school-house, and opening at the other into the entrance to the Town-hall, under which it was built. The end next the house, excellently fitted up with scenery and properties, and all the modern accessories of the drama, formed the stage, whilst the rest of the room held the audience; and a prettier stage, whether for public or private theatricals, hath seldom been seen. It was just the right size, just a proper frame for the fine tragic pictures it so often exhibited. If it had been larger, the illusion which gave the appearance of men and women to the young performers would have been destroyed, and the effect of the grouping much diminished by the comparative unimportance which space and vacancy give to the figures on the scene. That stage would be the very thing for the fashionable amusement of tableaux;* but even then they would want the presiding genius of our great master, who, although he pretended to no skill in the art, must have had a painter's eye, for never did I see such grouping. "Oh for an historical painter!" was Mr. Bowles, the poet's, exclamation, both at the death and the unveiling of Alcestis; and I never saw any one of the performances in which a young artist would not have found a series of models for composition and expression.

* The usual tableaux, mere copies of pictures by living people — a pretty retaliation on Art, who, it is to be presumed, herself copied from Nature — are, with all their gracefulness, rather insipid; but some fair young friends of mine, girls of great taste and talent, have been introducing a very pretty innovation on the original idea, by presenting, in dumb show, some of the most striking scenes of Scott's poems, "Marmion" and "The Lay," thus superadding the grace of motion to that of attitude, and forming a new and graceful amusement, half way between play and picture, for the affluent and the fair.

Besides the excellence of the theatre, the audience, another main point in the drama, was crowded, intelligent and enthusiastic. The visiters from Oxford, and the Mayor and Corporation of Belford, (in their furred gowns, —poor dear aldermen, I wonder they survived the heat!—but I suppose they did, for I never remember to have heard of any coroner's inquest at Belford, of which the verdict was "Died of the Greek plays,") these, the grandees of the University and the Borough, attended *ex-officio;* the parents and friends of the performers were drawn there by the pleasanter feelings of affection and pride, and the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood crowded to the theatre for a double reason—they liked it, and it was the fashion.

Another most delighted part of the audience consisted of the former pupils of the school, the Doctor's old scholars, who had formed themselves into a sort of club, meeting in the winter in London, and in the autumn at one of the principal inns at Belford, whither they thronged from all parts of England, and where, especially at the time of the triennial plays, they often stayed days and weeks, to assist at rehearsals and partake of the social gaiety of that merry time. For weeks before the plays, the Doctor's ever-hospitable house was crowded with visiters; his sons stealing a short absence from their several professions, with sometimes a blushing bride (for, in imitation of their father, they married early and happily); fair young friends of his fair daughters; distinguished foreigners; celebrated scholars; nephews, nieces, cousins, and friends, without count or end. It was one scene of bustle and gaiety; the gentle mistress smiling through it all, and seeming as if she had nothing to do but to make her innumerable guests as happy and as cheerful as she was herself. No one that entered the house could doubt her sincerity of welcome. However crowded the apartments might be, the gentle hostess had heart-room for all.

A pleasant scene it was for weeks before the play, since of all pleasures, especially of theatrical pleasures, the preparation is the most delightful; and in these preparations there was a more than common portion of amusing contrasts and diverting difficulties. Perhaps the training of the female characters was the most fertile in fun. Fancy a quick and lively boy learning to tread mincingly, and carry himself demurely, and move gently, and curtsy modestly, and speak softly, and blush, and cast down his eyes, and look as like a girl as if he had all his life worn petticoats. Fancy the vain attempt, by cold cream and chicken-skin gloves to remove the stain of the summer's sun, and bring the coarse red paws into a semblance of feminine delicacy! Fancy the rebellion of the lad, and his hatred of stays, and his horror of paint, and the thousand droll incidents that, partly from acci-

dent and partly from design, were sure to happen at each rehearsal, (the rehearsal of an English tragedy at a real theatre is comical enough, Heaven knows!) and it will not be astonishing that, in spite of the labour required by the study of so many long speeches, the performers as well as the guests behind the scenes were delighted with the getting-up of the Greek plays.

And in spite of their difficulties with the feminine costume, never did I see female characters more finely represented than by these boys. The lads of Shakspeare's days who played his Imogenes, and Constances, and Mirandas, could not have exceeded the Alcestises, and Electras, and Antigones of Belford School. And the male characters were almost equally perfect. The masterpieces of the Greek stage were performed not only with a critical accuracy in the delivery of the text, but with an animation and fervour which marked all the shades of feeling, as if the young actors had been accustomed to think and to feel in Greek. The effect produced upon the audience was commensurate with the excellence of the performance. The principal scenes were felt as truly as if they had been given in English by some of our best actors. Even the most unlettered lady was sensible to that antique grace and pathos, and understood a beauty in the words, though not the words.

Another attraction of these classical performances was the English prologue and epilogue by which they were preceded and followed. These were always written by old pupils of the school, and I cannot resist the temptation of transcribing one from the pen of the most remarkable person, the most learned, the most eloquent, and the most amiable which that school has ever produced—Mr. Serjeant Talfourd. It is a trifle, for a great lawyer has no time to dally with the Muse; but if one or two stray copies of these desultory volumes should chance to survive the present generation, they will derive a value not their own from possessing even the lightest memorial of a man whose genius and whose virtues can never be forgotten, whilst the writer will find her proudest ambition gratified in being allowed to claim the title of his friend.

PROLOGUE TO THE HECUBA OF EURIPIDES.

SPOKEN OCTOBER, 1827.

"Kind friends, with genial plaudits may we close
Our feeble miniature of mighty woes?
Or think you that we aim to strike, too late,
With crimes antique, and passions out of date?
No: altered but in form life's stage they fill,
And all our characters are extant still.

First, Hecuba:—nay, there my scheme 's too bold,
I grant—no lady in these times grows old;
But not in vain you 'll seek the ancient rage
In some starch vixen of '*a certain age.*'

Thus if you chance, though fair in her regards,
At whist her partner, to forget the cards,
Stop scandal's torrent with a word of peace,
Offend her cat, or compliment her niece;
Beneath her rouge when deeper colours rise,
Remember Hecuba—and mind your eyes.

Still would the mild Ulysses win the town,
His armour barter'd for a Counsel's gown:
Severest truths he never practised, teach,
And be profuse of wealth and life—in speech.
Or on the hustings gain th' inspiring cheer;
But hold! we own no politicians here.
The radiant colours Iris wreathes in heaven
May but be foes at most one year in seven,
And mingling brighter from the generous strife
Shed rainbow hues on passion-wearied life.

What! if the Thracian's guilt we rarely see—
Thousands for gain were lately mad as he;
When Trade held strange alliance with Romance,
And Fancy lent delusive shades to Chance—
Bade golden visions hover o'er the Strand,
And made 'Change-alley an enchanted land.
There the rapt merchant dreamt of Sindbad's vale,
And catalogued in thought its gems for sale;
There dived to Vigo's time-unalter'd caves
And ransom'd millions from the courteous waves.
Still might some daring band their arts employ,
To search for Priam's treasures hid in Troy—
For gold, which Polymnestor did *not find*,
But only miss'd, because the rogue was blind.
Or, since our classic robbers dote on Greece,
Set paper-sails to win her Golden Fleece;
And bid her hopes, revived by civic pity,
Flash in a loan to fade in a committee.

Nor need we here Imagination's aid
To own the virtue of the Trojan maid.
Would any ask where courage meek as hers
Truth's saddest tests to garish joy prefers,
Where Love earth's fragile clay to heaven allies,
And life prolong'd is one sweet sacrifice—
Where gentlest wisdom waits to cheer and guide ye;—
Husbands and lovers, only look beside ye!

And if our actors gave but feeble hints
Of the old Bard's imperishable tints,
Yet, if with them some classic grace abide,
And bid no British thought or throb subside,
Right well we know your fondest wish you gain,
We have not toil'd, nor you approved in vain."

PETER JENKINS, THE POULTERER.

As I prophesied in the beginning of this book, so it fell out: Mr. Stephen Lane became parish-officer of Sunham. I did not, however, foresee that the matter would be so easily and so speedily settled; neither did he. Mr. Jacob Jones, the ex-ruler of that respectable hamlet, was a cleverer person than we took him for; and, instead of staying to be beaten, sagely preferred to "evacuate Flanders," and leave the enemy in undisputed possession of the field of battle. He did not even make his appearance at the vestry, nor did any of his partisans. Stephen had it all his own way; was appointed overseer, and found himself, to his great astonishment, carrying all his points, sweeping away, cutting down, turning out, retrenching, and reforming

so as never reformer did before;—for in the good town of Belford, although eventually triumphant, and pretty generally successful in most of his operations, he had been accustomed to play the part, not of a minister who originates, but of a leader of opposition who demolishes measures; in short, he had been a sort of check, a balance-wheel in the borough machinery, and never dreamt of being turned into a main-spring; so that, when called upon to propose his own plans, his success disconcerted him not a little. It was so unexpected, and he himself so unprepared for a catastrophe which took from him his own dear fault-finding ground, and placed him in the situation of a reviewer who should be required to write a better book than the one under dissection, in the place of cutting it up.

Our good butcher was fairly posed, and, what was worse, his adversary knew it. Mr. Jacob Jones felt his advantage, returned with all his forces (consisting of three individuals, like "a three-tailed bashaw") to the field which he had abandoned, and commenced a series of skirmishing guerilla warfare—affairs of posts, as it were—which went near to make his ponderous, and hitherto victorious enemy, in spite of the weight of his artillery and the number and discipline of his troops, withdraw in his turn from the position which he found it so painful and so difficult to maintain. Mr. Jacob Jones was a great man at a quibble. He could not knock down like Stephen Lane, but he had a real talent for that sort of pulling to pieces which, to judge from the manner in which all children, before they are taught better, exercise their little mischievous fingers upon flowers, would seem to be instinctive in human nature. Never did a spoilt urchin of three years old demolish a carnation more completely than Mr. Jacob Jones picked to bits Mr. Lane's several propositions. On the broad question, the principle of the thing proposed, our good ex-butcher was pretty sure to be victorious; but in the detail, the clauses of the different measures, Mr. Jacob Jones, who had a wonderful turn for perplexing and puzzling whatever question he took in hand, a real genius for confusion, generally contrived (for the gentleman was a "word-catcher who lived on syllables") by expunging half a sentence in one place, and smuggling in two or three words in another — by alterations that were any thing but amendments, and amendments that overset all that had gone before, to produce such a mass of contradictions and nonsense, that the most intricate piece of special pleading that ever went before the Lord Chancellor, or the most addle-headed bill that ever passed through a Committee of the whole House, would have been common sense and plain English in the comparison. The man had eminent qualities for a debater, too, especially a debater of that order,—incorrigible pertness, intolerable pertinacity, and a noble contempt of right and wrong. Even in that matter which is most completely open to proof, a question of figures, he was wholly inaccessible to conviction; show him the fact fifty times over, and still he returned to the charge; still was his shrill squeaking treble heard above and between the deep sonorous bass of Stephen; still did his small narrow person whisk and flitter around the "huge rotundity" of that ponderous and excellent parish-officer, buzzing and stinging like some active hornet or slim dragon-fly about the head of one of his own oxen. There was no putting down Jacob Jones.

Our good butcher fretted and fumed, and lifted his hat from his head, and smoothed down his shining hair, and wiped his honest face, and stormed, and thundered, and vowed vengeance against Jacob Jones; and finally threatened not only to secede with his whole party from the vestry, but to return to the Butts, and leave the management of Sunham, workhouse, poor-rates, high-ways, and all, to his nimble competitor. One of his most trusty adherents indeed, a certain wealthy yeoman of the name of Alsop, well acquainted with his character, suggested that a very little flattery on the part of Mr. Lane, or even a few well-directed bribes, would not fail to dulcify and even to silence the worthy in question; but Stephen had never flattered any body in his life—it is very doubtful if he knew how; and held bribery of any sort in a real honest abhorrence, very unusual for one who had had so much to do with contested elections;—and to bribe and flatter Jacob Jones! Jacob, whom the honest butcher came nearer to hating than ever he had to hating any body! His very soul revolted against it. So he appointed Farmer Alsop, who understood the management of "the chap," as he was wont to call his small opponent, deputy overseer, and betook himself to his private concerns, in the conduct of his own grazing farm, in overseeing the great shop in the Butts, in attending his old clubs, and mingling with his old associates in Belford; and, above all, in sitting in his sunny summer-house during the sultry evenings of July and August, enveloped in the fumes of his own pipe, and clouds of dust from the high-road, — which was his manner of enjoying the pleasures of the country.

Towards autumn, a new and a different interest presented itself to the mind of Stephen Lane, in the shape of the troubles of one of his most intimate friends and most faithful and loyal adherents in the loyal borough of Belford Regis.

Peter Jenkins, the poulterer, his next-door neighbour in the Butts, formed exactly that sort of contrast in mind and body to the gigantic and energetic butcher which we so often find amongst persons strongly attached to each other. Each was equally good and kind, and

honest and true; but strength was the distinguishing characteristic of the one man, and weakness of the other. Peter, much younger than his friend and neighbour, was pale and fair, and slender and delicate, with very light hair, very light eyes, a shy timid manner, a small voice, and a general helplessness of aspect. "Poor fellow!" was the internal exclamation, the unspoken thought of every body that conversed with him; there was something so pitiful in his look and accent: and yet Peter was one of the richest men in Belford, having inherited the hoards of three or four miserly uncles, and succeeded to the well-accustomed poultry-shop in the Butts, a high narrow tenement, literally stuffed with geese, ducks, chickens, pigeons, rabbits, and game of all sorts, which lined the door and windows, and dangled from the ceiling, and lay ranged upon the counter in every possible state, dead or alive, plucked or unplucked, crowding the dark, old-fashioned-shop, and forming the strongest possible contrast to the wide ample repository next door, spacious as a market, where Stephen's calves, and sheep, and oxen, in their several forms of veal, and beef, and mutton, hung in whole carcasses from the walls, or adorned in separate joints the open windows, or filled huge trays, or lay scattered on mighty blocks, or swung in enormous scales, strong enough to have weighed Stephen Lane himself in the balance. Even that stupendous flesh-bazaar did not give greater or truer assurance of affluence than the high, narrow, crowded menagerie of dead fowl next door.

Yet still was Peter justly called "Poor fellow!" In the first place, because he was, for a man, far over-gentle, much too like the inhabitants of his own feathery den,—was not only "pigeon-livered and lacked gall," but was actually chicken-hearted;—in the next, because he was, so to say, chicken-pecked, and, although a stranger to the comforts of matrimony, was comfortably under petticoat government, being completely domineered over by a maiden sister.

Miss Judith Jenkins was a single woman of an uncertain age, lean, skinny, red-haired, exceedingly prim and upright, slow and formal in her manner, and, to all but Peter, remarkably smooth-spoken. To him her accent was invariably sharp, and sour, and peevish, and contradictory. She lectured him when at home, and rated him for going abroad. The very way in which she called him, though the poor man flew to obey her summons, the method after which she pronounced the innocent dissyllable "Peter," was a sort of taking to task. Having been his elder sister, (although nothing now was less palatable to her than any allusion to her right of primogeniture,) and his mother having died whilst he was an infant, she had been accustomed to exercise over him, from the time that he was in leading-strings, all the privileges of a nurse and gouvernante, and still called him to account for his savings and spendings, his comings and goings, much as she used to do when he was an urchin in short coats. Poor Peter never dreamt of rebellion; he listened and he endured; and every year as it passed over their heads seemed to increase her power and his submission. The uncivil world, always too apt to attribute any faults of temper in an old maid to the fact of her old-maidism, (whereas there really are some single women who are not more ill-humoured than their married neighbours,) used to attribute this acidity towards poor Peter, of which, under all her guarded upper manner, they caught occasional glimpses, to her maiden condition. I, for my part, believe in the converse reason. I hold that, which seemed to them the effect of her single state, to have been, in reality, its main cause. And nobody who had happened to observe the change in Miss Judith Jenkins' face, at no time over-beautiful, when, from the silent, modest, curtsying, shop-woman-like civility with which she had been receiving an order for a fine turkey poult, a sort of "butter won't melt in her mouth" expression was turned at once into a "cheese won't choke her" look and voice as she delivered the order to her unlucky brother, could be much astonished that any of the race of bachelors should shrink from the danger of encountering such a look in his own person. Add to this, that the damsel had no worldly goods and chattels, except what she might have saved in Peter's house, and, to do her justice, she was, I believe, a strictly honest woman; that the red hair was accompanied by red eye-brows and red eye-lashes, and eyes that, especially when talking to Peter, almost seemed red too; that her face was unusually freckled; and that, from her exceeding meagreness, her very fairness (if mere whiteness had been called such) told against her by giving the look of bones starting through the skin; and it will be admitted that there was no immediate chance of the unfortunate poulterer, getting rid, by the pleasant and safe means called matrimony, of an encumbrance under which he groaned and bent, like Sindbad the Sailor, when bestridden by that he-tormentor the Old Man of the Sea.

Thus circumstanced, Peter's only refuge and consolation was in the friendship and protection of his powerful neighbour, before whose strength and firmness of manner and character (to say nothing of his bodily prowess, which, although it can never be exerted against them, does yet insensibly influence all women) the prim maiden quailed amain. With Stephen to back him, Peter dared attend public meetings and private clubs; and, when sorely put to it by Judith's lectures, would slip through the back way into Mrs. Lane's parlour, basking in the repose of her

gentleness, or excited by her good husband's merriment, until all the evils of his home were fairly forgotten. Of course, the kind butcher and his sweet wife loved the kind harmless creature whom they, and they alone, had the power of raising into comfort and happiness; and he repaid their affection by the most true and faithful devotion to Stephen in all affairs, whether election contests or squabbles of the corporation or the vestry. Never had leader of a party a more devoted adherent; and abating his one fault of weakness, a fault which brought its own punishment, he was a partisan who would have done honour to any cause,—honest, open, true, and generous,—and one who would have been thoroughly hospitable, if his sister would but have let him.

As it was, he was a good fellow when she was out of the way, and had, like the renowned Jerry Sneak, his own moments of half-afraid enjoyment, on club-nights, and at Christmas parties, when, like the illustrious pin-maker, he sang his song and told his story with the best of them, and laughed, and rubbed his hands, and cracked his joke, and would have been quite happy, but for the clinging thought of his reception at home, where sat his awful sister, for she would sit up for him,

> "Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
> Nursing her wrath to keep it warm."

However, Stephen generally saw him in, and broke the first fury of the tempest, and sometimes laughed it off altogether. With Stephen to back him, he was not so much afraid. He even, when unusually elevated with punch, his favourite liquor, would declare that he did not mind her at all; what harm could a woman's scolding do? And though his courage would ooze out somewhat as he approached his own door, and ascended the three steep steps, and listened to her sharp, angry tread in the passage, (for her very footsteps were, to Peter's practised ear, the precursors of the coming lecture,) yet, on the whole, whilst shielded by his champion and protector, the jolly butcher, he got on pretty well, and was, perhaps, as happy as a man linked to a domineering woman can well expect to be.

Mr. Lane's removal was a terrible stroke to Peter. The distance, it was true, was only half a mile; but the every-day friend, the next-door neighbour, was gone; and the poor poulterer fretted and pined, and gave up his club and his parish-meetings, grew thinner and thinner, and paler and paler, and seemed dwindling away into nothing. He avoided his old friend during his frequent visits to the Butts, and even refused Mrs. Lane's kind and pressing invitations to come and see them at Sunham. His sister's absence or presence had ceased to make any difference in him; his spirits were altogether gone, and his very heart seemed breaking.

Affairs were in this posture, when, one fine afternoon in the beginning of October, Stephen was returning across Sunham Common from a walk that he had been taking over some of his pastures, which lay at a little distance from his house. He was quite unaccompanied, unless, indeed, his pet dog, Smoker, might be termed his companion—an animal of high blood and great sagacity, but so disguised by his insupportable fatness, that I, myself, who have generally a tolerable eye when a greyhound is in question, took him for some new-fangled quadruped from foreign parts,—some monstrous mastiff from the Anthropophagi, or Brobdignaggian pointer.—Smoker and his master were marching leisurely up Sunham Common, under the shade of a noble avenue of oaks, terminating at one end by a spacious open grove of the same majestic tree; the sun at one side of them, just sinking beneath the horizon, not making his usual "golden set," but presenting to the eye a ball of ruddy light; whilst the vapoury clouds on the east were suffused with a soft and delicate blush, like the reflection of roses on an alabaster vase;—the bolls of the trees stood out in an almost brassy brightness, and large portions of the foliage of the lower branches were bathed, as it were, in gold, whilst the upper boughs retained the rich russet brown of the season;—the green turf beneath was pleasant to the eye and to the tread, fragrant with thyme and aromatic herbs, and dotted here and there with the many-coloured fungi of autumn;—the rooks were returning to their old abode in the oak-tops, children of all ages were gathering acorns underneath; and the light smoke was curling from the picturesque cottages, with their islets of gardens, which, intermingled with straggling horses, cows, and sheep, and intersected by irregular pools of water, dotted the surface of the village-green.

It was a scene in which a poet or a painter would have delighted. Our good friend Stephen was neither. He paced along, supporting himself on a tall, stout hoe, called a paddle, which, since he had turned farmer, he had assumed instead of his usual walking-stick, for the purpose of eradicating docks and thistles:—now beheading a weed—now giving a jerk amongst a drift of fallen leaves, and sending them dancing on the calm autumnal air;—now catching on the end of his paddle an acorn as it fell from the tree, and sending it back amongst the branches like a shuttlecock;—now giving a rough but hearty caress to his faithful attendant Smoker, as the affectionate creature poked his long nose into his hand;—now whistling the beginning of one tune, now humming the end of another; whilst a train of thoughts, pleasant and unpleasant, merry and sad, went whirling along his brain. Who

can describe or remember the visions of half an hour, the recollections of half a mile? First, Stephen began gravely to calculate the profits of those upland pastures, called and known by the name of the Sunham Crofts; the number of tons of hay contained in the ricks, the value of the grazing, and the deduction to be made for labour, manure, tithe, and poor-rate,—the land-tax, thought Stephen to himself, being redeemed;—then poor little Dinah Keep crossed his path, and dropped her modest curtsy, and brought to mind her bed-ridden father, and his night-mare, Jacob Jones, who had refused to make this poor cripple the proper allowance; and Stephen cursed Jacob in his heart, and resolved to send Dinah a bit of mutton that very evening;—then Smoker went beating about in a patch of furze by the side of the avenue, and Stephen diverged from his path to help him, in hopes of a hare;—then, when that hope was fairly gone, and Stephen and Smoker had resumed their usual grave and steady pace, a sow, browsing among the acorns, with her young family, caught his notice and Smoker's, who had like to have had an affair with her in defence of one of the little pigs, whilst his master stopped to guess her weight. "Full fourteen score," thought Stephen, "as she stands; what would it be if fatted?—twenty, at least. A wonderful fine animal! I should like one of the breed." Then he recollected how fond Peter Jenkins used to be of a roast pig;—then he wondered what was the matter with poor Peter;—and just at that point of his cogitations, he heard a faint voice cry, "Stephen!"—and turning round to ascertain to whom the voice belonged, found himself in front of Peter himself, looking more shadowy than ever in the deepening twilight.

Greetings kind and hearty, passed between the sometime neighbours, and Smoker was, by no means, behindhand in expressing his pleasure at the sight of an old friend. They sat down on a bank of turf, and moss, and thyme, formed by a water-channel, which had been cut to drain the avenue in winter; and the poor poulterer poured his griefs into the sympathizing ear of his indignant friend.

"And now she's worse than ever," quoth Peter; "I think soon that she'll want the key of the till. She won't let me go to the club, or the vestry, or the mayor's dinner; and the Tories have got hold of her, and if there should happen to be an election, she won't let me vote."

"Marry, and be rid of her, man!—that's my advice," shouted Stephen. "Dang it! if I'd be managed by any woman that ever was born. Marry, and turn her out of doors!" vociferated Stephen Lane, striking his paddle into the bank with such vehemence, that that useful implement broke in the effort to pull it out again. "Marry, I say!" shouted Stephen.

"How can I?" rejoined the meek man of chickens; "she won't let me."

"Won't let him!" ejaculated the ex-butcher, with something like contempt. "Won't let him! Afore I'd let any woman dare to hinder me—Howsomever, men are not all alike. Some are as vicious as a herd of wild bulls, and some as quiet as a flock of sheep. Every man to his nature. Is there any lass whom you could fancy, Peter, provided a body could manage this virago of a sister of yours? Does any pretty damsel run in your head?"

"Why, I can't but say," replied Peter, (and, doubtless, if there had been light enough to see him, Peter, whilst saying it, blushed like a young girl,) "I can't but confess," said the man of the dove-cot, "that there is a little maiden—Did you ever see Sally Clements?"

"What!" rejoined the hero of the cleaver, "Sally Clements! Did I ever see her! Sally Clements—the dear little girl that, when her father first broke, and then died broken-hearted, refused to go and live in ease and plenty in Sir John's family here, (and I always respected my lady for making her the offer) as nursery governess, because she would not leave her sick grandmother, and who has stayed with her ever since, waiting on the poor old woman, and rearing poultry——"

"She's the best fattener of turkeys in the country," interrupted Peter.

"Rearing poultry," proceeded Stephen, "and looking after the garden by day, and sitting up half the night at needlework! Sally Clements—the prettiest girl within ten miles, and the best! Sally Clements—whom my mistress (and she's no bad judge of a young woman) loves as if she was her own daughter. Sally Clements! dang it, man! you shall have her. But does Sally like you?"

"I don't think she dislikes me," answered Peter, modestly. "We've had a deal of talk when I have been cheapening her poultry,—buying, I should say; for God knows, even if I had not liked her as I do, I never could have had the heart to bate her down. And I'm a great favourite with her good grandmother; and you know what a pleasure it would be to take care of her, poor old lady! as long as she lives, and how comfortably we could all live together in the Butts.—Only Judith——"

"Hang Judith!—you shall have the girl, man!" again ejaculated Stephen, thumping the broken paddle against the ground—"you shall have her, I say!"

"But think of Judith! And then, since Jacob Jones has got hold of her——"

"Jacob Jones!" exclaimed Stephen, in breathless astonishment.

"Yes. Did I not tell you that she was converted to the Tories? Jacob Jones has got hold of her; and he and she both say that I'm in a consumption, and want me to quarrel with you, and to make my will, and leave

all to her, and make him executor; and then I do believe they would worry me out of my life, and marry before I was cold in my coffin, and dance over my grave," sighed poor Peter.

"Jacob Jones!" muttered Stephen to himself, in soliloquy; "Jacob Jones!" And then, after ten minutes' hard musing, during which he pulled off his hat, and wiped his face, and smoothed down his shining hair, and broke the remains of his huge paddle to pieces, as if it had been a willow twig, he rubbed his hands with a mighty chuckle, and cried, with the voice of a Stentor, "Dang it, I have it!"

"Harkye, man!" continued he, addressing Peter, who had sat pensively on one side of his friend, whilst Smoker reposed on the other — "Harkye, man! you shall quarrel with me, and you shall make your will. Send Lawyer Davis to me to-night; for we must see that it shall be only a will, and not a conveyance or a deed of gift; and you shall also take to your bed. Send Thomson, the apothecary, along with Davis; they 're good fellows both, and will rejoice in humbugging Miss Judith. And then you shall insist on Jacob's marrying Judith, and shall give her five hundred pounds down, that 's a fair fortune, as times go; I don't want to cheat the woman; besides it 's worth any thing to be quit of her; and then they shall marry. Marriages are made in heaven, as my mistress says; and if that couple don't torment each other's heart out, my name 's not Stephen. And when they are fairly gone off on their bridal excursion, — to Windsor, may be; ay, Mistress Judith used to want to see the Castle,—off with them to Windsor from the church-door; —and then for another will, and another wedding—hey, Peter! and a handsome marriage-settlement upon little Sally. We 'll get her and her grandmother to my house to-morrow, and my wife will see to the finery. Off with you, man! Don't stand there, between laughing and crying: but get home and set about it. And mind you don't forget to send Thomson and Lawyer Davis to me this very evening."

And home went Stephen, chuckling; and, as he said, it was done,—ay, within a fortnight from that very day; and the two couples were severally as happy and as unhappy as their several qualities could make them—Mr. and Mrs. Jones finding so much employment in plaguing each other, that the good poulterer and his pretty wife, and Stephen, and the hamlet of Sunham, were rid of them altogether.

THE SAILOR'S WEDDING.

Besides Mrs. Martin, her maid Patty, and her cat, there was one inmate of the little toy-shop in the market-place, who immediately attracted Mr. Singleton's attention, and not only won, but secured, the warm and constant affection of the kind-hearted bachelor. It was a chubby, noisy, sturdy, rude, riotous elf, of some three years old, still petticoated, but so self-willed, and bold, and masterful, so strong, and so conscious of his strength, so obstinate and resolute, and, above all, so utterly contemptuous of female objurgation, and rebellious to female rule, (an evil propensity that seems born with the *unfair* sex,) that it was by no means necessary to hear his Christian name of Tom, to feel assured that the urchin in question belonged to the masculine half of the species. Nevertheless, daring, wilful, and unruly as it was, the brat was loveable, being, to say the truth, one of the merriest, drollest, best-natured, most generous, and most affectionate creatures that ever bounded about this work-a-day world; and Mr. Singleton, who, in common with many placid quiet persons, liked nothing so well as the reckless light-heartedness which supplied the needful impetus to his own tranquil spirit, took to the boy the very first evening, and became, from that hour, his most indulgent patron and protector, his champion in every scrape, and refuge in every calamity. There was no love lost between them. Tom, who would have resisted Mrs. Martin or Patty to the death; who, the more they called him, the more he would not come, and the more they bade him not do a thing the more he did it; who, when cautioned against wetting his feet, jumped up to his neck * in the water-tub, and when desired to keep himself clean, solaced himself and the tabby cat with a game at romps in the coal-hole; who, in short, whilst under female dominion, played every prank of which an unruly boy is capable—was amenable to the slightest word or look from Mr. Singleton, came at his call, went away at his desire; desisted at his command from riding the unfortunate wooden steed, who, to say nothing of two or three dangerous falls, equally perilous to the horse and rider, ran great risk of being worn out by Master Tom's passion for equestrian exercise; and even under his orders abandoned his favourite exercise of parading

* I remember an imp, the son of a dear friend of mine, of some four or five years old, of very delicate frame, but of a most sturdy and masterful spirit, who one day standing on the lawn without a hat, in the midst of a hard rain, said to his mother, who, after nurses and nursery-maids had striven in vain with the screaming, kicking, struggling urchin, tried her gentler influence to prevail on him to come in doors for fear of catching cold:—"I won't go in! I will stand here! I choose to catch cold! I like to be ill! and if you plague me much longer, I'll die!" This hopeful young gentleman has outlived the perils of his childhood, (I suppose his self-will was drubbed out of him by stronger and equally determined comrades at a public school,) and he is now an aspirant of some eminence in the literary and political world. I have not seen him these twenty years: but if this note should meet his eye, and he should happen to recognize his own portrait, he would be amused by my tender recollection of his early days.

before the door beating a toy-drum, or blowing a penny-trumpet, and producing from those noisy implements a din more insupportable than ever such instruments have been found capable of making, before or since.

Mr. Singleton did more: not content with the negative benefit of restraining Master Tom's inclination for idleness, he undertook and accomplished the positive achievement of commencing his education. Under his auspices, at a cost of many cakes and much gingerbread, and with the great bribe of being able to read for himself the stories of fairies and giants, of Tom Thumb, and Blue Beard, and Cinderella, and Sindbad the Sailor, which he was now fain to coax his aunt and her maid Patty into telling him, did Tom conquer the mysteries of the alphabet and spelling-book, in spite of the predictions of the dame of a neighbouring day-school, who had had the poor boy at her academy, as she was pleased to call it, for half a year, during which time she and her birch, put together, had not been able to teach him the difference between A and B, and who now, in the common spirit of prophecy in which "the wish is father to the thought," boldly foretold that "all the Mr. Singletons in England would never make a scholar of Tom Lyndham; she, for her part, had no notion of a child, who not only stole her spectacles, but did not mind being whipt for it when he had done. She wished no ill to the boy, but he would come to no good. All the world would see that."

Strange as it may seem, this effusion of petty malice had its effect in stimulating the efforts of our good curate. The spirit of contradiction, that very active principle of our common nature, had its existence even in him; but, as bees can extract wax and honey from poisonous plants, so in his kind and benevolent temper it showed itself only in an extraordinary activity in well-doing. "Tom Lyndham shall be a scholar," thought and said Mr. Singleton; and as his definition of the word was something different from that of the peevish old sibyl, whose notion of scholarship reached no farther than the power of reading or rather chanting, without let or pause, a chapter of crabbed names in the Old Testament, with such a comprehension of the sense as it pleased Heaven, and such a pronunciation as would have made a Hebraist stare, he not only applied himself earnestly to the task of laying a foundation of a classical education, by teaching the boy writing, ciphering, and the rudiments of the Latin grammar, but exerted all his influence to get him admitted, at as early an age as the rules would permit, to the endowed grammar-school of the town.

The master of the school, a man who united, as we have before said, great learning to a singular generosity of character and sweetness of temper, received with more than common kindness the fine open-countenanced boy, whom Mr. Singleton recommended so strongly to his notice and protection. But after he had been with him about the same time that he had passed with the dame of the day-school, he, in answer to his patron's anxious inquiries, made a prophecy nearly resembling hers,—to wit, that Tom Lyndham, spirited, intelligent, and clever as he undoubtedly was, seemed to him the most unlikely boy of his form to become an eminent scholar.

And as time wore away, this persuasion only became the more rooted in the good Doctor's mind. "He may, to be sure, take to Greek, as you say, Mr. Singleton, and go off to Oxford on the archbishop's foundation; things that seem as impossible do sometimes happen; nevertheless, to judge from probabilities, and from the result of a pretty long experience, I should say that to expect from Tom Lyndham any thing beyond the learning that will bear him creditably through the school and the world, is to demand a change of temper and of habit not far from miraculous. I don't say what the charms of the Greek Grammar may effect, but, in my mind, the boy who is foremost in every sport, and first in every exercise; who swims, and rows, and dances, and fences better than any lad of his inches in the county; and who, in defence of a weaker child, or to right some manifest wrong, will box, ay, and beat into the bargain, a youth half as big again as himself; and who moreover is the liveliest, merriest, pleasantest little fellow that ever came under my observation—is far fitter for the camp than the college. Send him into the world: that's the place for him. Put him into the army, and I'll answer for his success. For my own part, I should not wonder to find him enlisting some day; neither should I care; for if he went out a drummer, he'd come back a general; nothing can keep down Tom Lyndham:" and with this prognostic, at once pleasant and puzzling, (for poor Mr. Singleton had not an acquaintance in the army, except the successive recruiting-officers who had at various times carried off the heroes of Belford,) the worthy Doctor marched away.

Fortune, however, who seems to find amusement in sometimes disappointing the predictions of the wise, and sometimes bringing them to pass in the most unexpected manner, and by totally opposite means, had a different destiny for our friend Tom.

It so happened that one of the principal streets of our good town of Belford, a street the high road through which leading westward, bore the name of Bristol-street, boasted a bright red mansion, retired from the line of houses, with all the dignity of a dusty shrubbery, a sweep not very easy to turn, a glaring bit of blank wall, and a *porte cochère*. Now the wall being itself somewhat farther back than the other houses in the street, and the space between that and the ordinary pavement

being regularly flagged, an old sailor without his legs had taken possession of the interval, for the sake of writing, with white and coloured chalks, sundry loyal sentences, such as "God save the King," "Rule Britannia," and so forth, by way of excitement to the passers-by to purchase one from a string of equally loyal sea-ballads that hung overhead, intermixed with two-penny portraits of eminent naval commanders, all very much alike, and all wearing very blue coats and very red faces.

At first, the two respectable ladies of the mansion (dowager spinsters, Morris by name) objected greatly to the use made of their wall and their pavement by the crippled veteran in question, who was commonly known throughout Belford by the name of "Poor Jack;" probably from his attachment to the well-known sailor's ditty, which happened to form his first introduction to the younger of the two ladies in question:

"Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack,—
Pray what d'ye think of me?"

"I think you a very saucy person," replied Miss Arabella Morris to this question, not said but sung by the sailor in a most stentorian voice, as he lay topping and tailing the great I in "God save great George our King," just on one side of their gate. "I think you are a very saucy person," quoth Miss Arabella, "to sit begging here, just at our door."

"Begging!" rejoined poor Jack; "I'm no beggar, I hope. I've lost my precious limbs, when I fought under Admiral Rodney; I've a pension, bless his Majesty, and have no call to disparage the service by begging like a land-lubber,

"Sailors to forget their duty,
Must not come for to go—"

chanted Jack.

"I must really apply to the Mayor," said Miss Arabella.

"Go," said Jack, continuing his work and resuming his stave.

"When the captain he heard of it,
He very much applauded what she had done,
And he made her the first lieutenant
Of the gallant Thunder bomb."

"Made me a first lieutenant!" exclaimed the affronted Arabella. "Was ever any thing so impertinent? Pray, if you are not a beggar, what may you be?"

"My name, d'ye see, 's Tom Tough,
Oh, I've seen a little sarvice,
Where the foaming billows roar and the winds do blow;
I've sailed with noble Howe,
And I've sailed with gallant Jervis,
And only lost an eye, and got a timber toe;
And more, if you'd be knowing,
I've sailed with old Boscawen:"

again shouted (for singing is hardly the word to express his sort of music) the incorrigible Jack.

"Well, I must go to the Mayor," said Miss Arabella; and Jack again uplifted his voice:—

"Then in Providence I trust,
For you know what must be, must;"

and, consoled by this philosophical strain, he tranquilly continued his occupation, which, after a little persuasion from the mayor, and something like an apology from Jack himself, (to whose looks and ways they began to get accustomed,) the good ladies permitted him to pursue in peace and quietness under their sheltering wall.

The above conversation will have shown that poor Jack was something of a humorist; but his invincible good-humour was his distinguishing qualification. I doubt if there was in all England a more contented person than the poor cripple who picked up a precarious livelihood by selling loyal ballads in Bristol-street in Belford. Maimed as he was, there was something in his round bullet-head, and rough sun-burnt countenance,—in his nod, his wink, his grin, (for it would not do to call such a contortion a smile,) in the snap of his fingers, and the roll of his short athletic body —more expressive of fun and merriment than I ever beheld in any human being. Call him poor Jack, indeed! Why, if happiness be wealth, he was the richest Jack in Christendom!

So thought Tom Lyndham, whose road to and from school passed the *lair* of the sailor, and who having stood one evening to hear him go through the whole ballad,

"On board of the Arethusa,"

and finally joined in the *refrain* with much of Jack's own spirit, fell into conversation with him on the battles he had fought, the ships he had served in, and the heroes he had served under, (and it was remarkable that Jack talked of the ships with the same sort of personal affection which he displayed towards their captains,) and from that evening made up his mind that he would be a sailor too.

Sooth to say, the enthusiasm with which Jack spoke of Keppel and Rodney, and Parker and Howe, as well as of the commanders of his youth, Hawke and "old Boscawen;" his graphic description of the sea-fights in which the English flag did really seem to be the ensign of victory; the rough, bold, manly tone of the ballads which he sung, and the personal character of the narrator—were in themselves enough to work such an effect on a lively, spirited, ambitious boy, whose bravery of mind and hardihood of body made him account toil and danger rather as elements of enjoyment, like the bright frosty air of winter, than as evils to shrink from; whilst his love of distinction made him covet glory for its own sake, and his grateful and affectionate temper rendered the prospect of wealth (for

of course he was to be a second Rodney) delightful as the means of repaying to his aunt and Mr. Singleton the benefits which he had derived from their kindness.

Besides this, he had always had an innate passion for the water. His earliest pranks of dabbling in kennels, and plunging in pools, had shown his duck-like propensities; and half his scrapes at school had occurred in a similar way:—bathing before the appointed day, swimming in dangerous places, rowing and fishing at forbidden hours; he had been caught half-a-dozen times boat-building at the wharf, and had even been detected in substituting Robinson Crusoe for the Greek Grammar,—from which Mr. Singleton expected such miracles. In short, Tom Lyndham was one of those boys whose genius may fairly be called semi-aquatic.

That he would be a sailor was Tom's firm resolution. His only doubt was whether to accomplish the object in the regular manner by apprizing Mrs. Martin and Mr. Singleton of his wishes, or to embrace the speedier and less troublesome method of running away. The latter mode offered the great temptation of avoiding remonstrances equally tedious (and the grateful boy would hardly allow himself to think *how* tedious!) and unavailing, and of escaping from the persuasions of which his affectionate heart felt in anticipation the power to grieve, though not to restrain; besides, it was the approved fashion of your young adventurer,—Robinson Crusoe had run away: and he consulted Jack seriously on the measure, producing, in answer to certain financial questions which the experience of the tar suggested, a new half-crown, two shillings, a crooked sixpence, and sundry halfpence, as his funds for the expedition.

"Five and threepence halfpenny!" exclaimed the prudent mariner, counting the money, and shaking his head,—"'Twont do, master! Consider, there's the voyage to Portsmouth, on board o' the what d'ye call 'um, the coach there; and then you'll want new rigging, and have to lie at anchor a shortish bit may be, before you get afloat. I'll tell you what, messmate, leaves light; ax his honour the chaplain, the curate, or whatever you call him, and if so be he turns cantankerous, you can but cut and run, after all."

And Tom agreed to take his advice; and after settling in his own mind, as he walked home, various ingenious plans for breaking the matter gradually and tenderly to his good old aunt, (on whom he relied for the still more arduous task of communicating this tremendous act of contumacy to his reverend patron,) he, from sheer nervousness and over-excitement, bolted into the house, and forgetting all his intended preparations and softenings,—a thing which has often happened, from the same causes, to older and wiser persons,—shouted out at once to Mrs. Martin, who happened to be in the shop talking to Mr. Singleton, "Aunt, I'm determined to go to sea directly; and if you won't let me, I'll run away."

Never were two people more astonished. And as the hitherto respectful and dutiful boy, who, with all his spirit, had never before contradicted a wish expressed by either, continued to answer to all remonstrances, "I will go to sea; and if you won't let me, I'll run away," Mr. Singleton began to think it best to inquire into his own views, motives and prospects.

Vague enough they were, to be sure! Robinson Crusoe, and a crippled sailor, and half-a-dozen ballads for inducements, and a letter of introduction from poor Jack to a certain veteran of his own standing, Bob Griffin by name, formerly a boatswain, and now keeping a public-house at Portsea, and *commanding*, according to him of the stumps, a chain of interest somewhat resembling Tom Bowling's famous ladder of promotion in Roderick Random, a scrawl directed in red chalk, in printed letters, half an inch long, to MISTUR BOB GRIFIN LANLURD SHIP AGRUND PORSEE, by way of introduction to the naval service of Great Britain! However, there was in the earnestness of the lad, in the very slightness of the means on which he built, and in his bold, ardent, and manly character, that evidence of the bent of his genius, the strong and decided turn for one pursuit, and one only, which it is scarcely wise to resist.

Mr. Singleton, remembering, perhaps, the prediction of the good Doctor, yielded. He happened to have a first cousin, a captain in the navy; and on visiting our friend Jack, whom he found repairing the chalking of "Rule Britannia," and chanting two lines of his favourite stave,

> "But the worst of it was when the little ones were sickly,
> Whether they would live or die the doctor could not tell."

he had the satisfaction to find that he had sailed with his relation when second lieutenant of a sloop called the Gazelle; and although relinquishing, with many thanks, the letter of introduction to "Mistur Bob Grifin," actually accepted one from the same hard honest fist to Captain Conyers; and it is to be doubted whether poor Jack's recommendation of "the tight youngster," as the veteran called him, had not as much to do with the captain's cordial reception of his new midshipman, as the more elaborate praises of Mr. Singleton.

A midshipman, however, he was. The war was at its height, and he had the luck (excellent luck as he thought it) to be in the very hottest of its fury. In almost every fight of the great days of our naval glory, the days of Nelson and his immediate successors, was Tom Lyndham, first of the first, bravest of the

brave, readiest of the ready. From the moment that his age and rank allowed him to be officially noticed in the despatches, he was so; and it is to be questioned whether the very happiest moment of Mr. Singleton's life was not that in which he first read Tom's name in the Gazette. He cried like a child; and then he read it to Mrs. Martin, and whilst trying to lecture her for crying, cried again himself. He took the paper round the town to every house of decent gentility, from the mayor's downwards; read it to the parish-clerk and the sexton; and finally relinquished an evening party to which he was engaged at the Miss Morrises', to carry the news and the newspaper to poor Jack, who, grown too infirm to face the weather, had been comfortably placed, through his kindness, in an almshouse about two miles off. It is even reported that, on this occasion, Mr. Singleton, although by no means noted for his skill in music, was so elated as to join poor Jack in the chorus of

"On board of the Arethusa,"

in honour of Tom Lyndham.

From this time all prospered with our gallant sailor, — except, indeed, a few glorious scars which he would have been ashamed to want, and one of which, just after he had been appointed first lieutenant to the Diana, gave him the opportunity of coming back to Belford, for a short time, to regain his health, and revisit his old friends. Think of the delight of Mr. Singleton, of Mrs. Martin, of her maid Patty, and of poor Jack!

"Here am I, poor Jack!'

shouted the veteran when Tom made his appearance;

Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack,—
Pray what d'ye think of me?'

And the above, as it happened, was highly appropriate; for between battles and prizes, Mr. Lyndham, although still so young a man, was rich enough to allow him to display his frank and noble generosity of spirit in the most delicate way to Mr. Singleton and his aunt, and in the most liberal to Jack and Patty. None who had been kind to him were forgotten; and his delightful spirit and gaiety, his animated good-humour, his acuteness and intelligence, rendered him the very life of the place.

He was a singularly fine young man, too; not tall, but strong, muscular, and well built, with a noble chest, and that peculiar carriage of the head, which gives so much of dignity to the air and figure. The head itself was full of manliness and expression. The short curling black hair, already giving token of early baldness, and exposing a high, broad polished forehead, whose fairness contrasted with the sun-burnt complexion of the rest of the face; an eagle eye, a mouth combining firmness and sweetness, regular features and a countenance at once open, spirited, and amiable,—harmonized well with a character and reputation of which his fellow-townsmen already felt proud. Tom Lyndham was the very pride of Belford; happy was the damsel whom he honoured with his hand at the monthly assembly; and, when he rejoined his ship, he was said to have carried away, unintentionally, more hearts than had been won with care, and pain, and malice prepense, by any half-dozen flirting recruiting-officers in the last half-dozen years.

No Belford beauty was, however, destined to captivate the brave sailor. Love and fortune had prepared for him a very different destiny.

Returning home towards the end of the war, (I mean the great war, the war *par eminence*, the war with Napoleon,) into Portsmouth harbour, or rather bringing in a prize, a frigate of many more guns and much greater force than his own, the gallant Captain Lyndham (for he had now been for some years posted) no sooner set foot on shore, than he encountered an old messmate. "Ha, Lyndham! your old luck, I see! You and the little Laodamia have peppered the Frenchmen as usual," said the brave Captain Manning. "Do you make any stay at Portsmouth?"

"Yes," replied Captain Lyndham; "I have sent my first lieutenant to London with despatches, and shall be fixed here for some days."

"I am thoroughly glad to hear it," rejoined his friend; "for I myself am rather awkwardly situated. An old aunt of mine has just brought two of my cousins to see the lions, depending on me for their escort. Now I must be off to the Admiralty immediately; dare not stay another hour for all the aunts and cousins in Christendom. They, poor souls, don't know a creature in the place; and I shall be eternally obliged to you if you will take my turn of duty, and walk them over the dock-yards, and so forth. By the way, they are nice girls—not sisters, but cousins. One is an heiress, with above 3000*l.* a-year, and a sweet place by the side of the Wye; the other is called a beauty. I don't think her so; or rather, I prefer the heiress. But nice girls they are both. I have the honour to be their guardian, and if either should hit your fancy, you have my free leave to win her and wear her. So now come with me, and I'll introduce you."

And in five minutes more they were in one of the best rooms at the Fountain, and Captain Lyndham was introduced to Mrs. Lacy, and to Miss Manning and Miss Sophia Manning.

Mrs. Lacy was a lady-like elderly woman, a widow without a family, and very fond of her nieces, who had been brought up under her own eye, and seemed to supply to her the place of daughters. "This is the heiress!"

thought Captain Lyndham, as he glanced over a tall commanding figure, expensively and fashionably dressed, and with that decided air of consequence and self-importance which the habit of power is too apt to give to a person in that unfortunate predicament. "This is the heiress! and this, I suppose, must be the beauty," thought Captain Lyndham, turning to a shorter, slenderer, fairer young woman, very simply dressed, but all blushes and smiles, and youthful animation. "This must be the beauty," thought the Captain, "and whatever Manning may say, beautiful she is —never saw a sweeter creature than this Miss Sophy."

And if he thought Sophy Manning pretty then, the impression was far deepened when he had passed two or three days in her company—had walked her over the wonders of that floating world, a man-of-war—had shown her the dock-yards, with their miracles of machinery; and had even persuaded Mrs. Lacy, a timorous woman, the least in the world afraid of being drowned, and Miss Manning, a thorough fine lady, exceedingly troubled for her satin pelisse, first of all to take a dinner on board the dear Laodamia, and then to suffer themselves to be rowed round St. Helen's in the captain's own boat, gallantly manned by the officers of the ship.

Small enjoyment had Mrs. Lacy, in fear of her life, or the stately Honoria, in care for her finery; but Sophy, in a white gown and a straw bonnet, thinking nothing of herself or of her dress, but wholly absorbed by a keen and vivid interest in the detail of a sailor's life—in admiration of the order and cleanliness that everywhere met her eye, (always the first point of astonishment to a landswoman,) and in a still more intense feeling of pleasure and wonder at the careless good-humour of those lords of the ocean,—bold as lions to their enemies, playful as kittens to their friends,—was full of delight. Nothing could equal her enthusiasm for the navy. The sailors, who, like dogs and children and women, and all other creatures who have not spoilt their fine natural instinct by an over-cultivation of the reasoning powers, are never mistaken in the truth of a feeling, and never taken in by its assumption, perceived it at once, and repaid it by the most unfeigned and zealous devotion. They took all possible care of Mrs. Lacy and Miss Manning, as women, and ladies, and friends of their Captain; but Miss Sophy was the girl for them. They actually preferred her pretty face to the figure-head of the Laodamia.

And Captain Lyndham, himself an enthusiast for his profession, what thought he of this enthusiasm for the sea, and the navy, and that frigate of frigates, the Laodamia? Did he like it the less because he might honestly suspect that some little reference to himself had strengthened and quickened this deep interest? because she had drawn from him his own early history, and talked of the toy-shop in the market-place of Belford, and of poor Jack, and the maid Patty, and even of Mr. Singleton himself, (little as one would think that good gentleman, now abroad with his third wife, was calculated to strike a young lady,) with almost as much affection as of his frigate and his prize, and his ship's crew, and the absent first lieutenant, his especial friend, and a little midshipman, his especial protegé? To any man of sensibility, this sensibility, shown by a woman, young, lovely, animated, and artless, would have been dangerous: to a sailor just come ashore, it was irresistible. He made her talk in return of her own friends and pleasures and amusements, of her home at Sanbury, where she had lived all her life with her aunt and her cousin, and where she hoped always to live; ("not always," thought our friend the Captain;) and how much more loveable those dear relations were in that dear home. "My aunt," said Sophy, "is nervous and timid, so that you know nothing of her but that infirmity; and dear Honor does not love travelling, and does not like the sea, and has been all her life so much admired, that she is a little spoilt, and does not always know what she would have; but you will love Honor when you see her at home."

"I may like her," said the captain, "but I shall never love any woman but one;" and then followed in full form, the declaration and the acceptance. "I am so glad that you are not the heiress," added Captain Lyndham, after repeating to her her cousin's jesting permission to him to marry which of his wards he liked best; "I am so glad that you are not the heiress!"

"Are you?" said Sophy, quietly. "Now I should have thought that you, thorough sportsman as you are, for a sailor," added Sophy, slyly, "would have liked Sanbury Manor, with its right of shooting, coursing, and fishing, and its glorious Wye river. You would like Sanbury Manor."

"Hang Sanbury Manor!" exclaimed the captain.

"Nay," said Sophy, "it 's a pretty place, and a pretty house; one of those old-fashioned houses that fall upon the eye like a picture. The very lodge at Sanbury is beautiful. You must not take an aversion to Sanbury."

"I should like any place that had been your home, pretty or ugly," replied Captain Lyndham; "or, rather, I should think any house pretty that you lived in. But, nevertheless, I am heartily glad that you are not the heiress of Sanbury, because I have been so fortunate with prizes, and you seem so simple in your tastes, that I have enough for both of us; and now no one can even suspect me of being mercenary—of thinking of any thing or any body but your own dear self."

"*I* should not have suspected you," said Sophy, tenderly; "but you must go to Sanbury, and look at the old place, my home for so many years; you promise me that?"

"Yes," replied the captain, "but it must be with Sophy Lyndham, and not with Sophy Manning;"—and, in spite of Sophy's blushing "must, indeed!" so it was settled! They were all to go to London, to which the affairs of his ship and prize now called the captain. There they were to be married; and on their return from a bridal excursion to Bath, and Clifton, and Wales, were to pay a short visit to Mrs. Lacy and Honor, at the old manor-house, which had for so many years been the fair bride's only home.

Mrs. Lacy, on being apprized of the intended marriage, began talking about money and settlements, and those affairs which, to persons not in love, seem so important; but Captain Lyndham stopped her, and Sophy stopped her; and as, in a letter to Captain Manning, the generous sailor desired that writings might be prepared, by which all that he was worth in the world should be settled on Sophy and her children—and as these settlements, read over by the lawyer in the usual unintelligible manner, were signed by the enamoured seaman without the slightest examination, it was impossible for any guardian to object to conduct so confiding and so liberal.

"Oh, that poor Jack could see this day!" was Captain Lyndham's exclamation, as they were leaving London after the happy ceremony, in his own elegant new carriage, attended, somewhat to his surprise, by the lady's maid, whom he had thought exclusively devoted to the service of Miss Manning,—"Oh, that poor Jack could see this day!—you must make acquaintance with him, Sophy, and with my good aunt, and Mr. Singleton. You must know them, Sophy; they will so adore you!"

"And I shall so love the people whom you love," rejoined Sophy: but we have no room for bridal talk, and must hasten to the conclusion of our story.

After a few days of rapid travelling,—short days they seemed to the married lovers,—after a very brief tour, for the bridegroom's time was limited,—they arrived at the beautiful village of Sanbury.

"There it is—the dear manor-house!" exclaimed Sophy, as they approached a fine old building, embosomed in its own venerable oaks, the silver Wye winding like a shining snake amid the woody hills and verdant lawns;—"There it is!" exclaimed the fair bride; "mine own dear home! and your home, too, my own dear husband! for, being mine, it is yours," continued she, with a smile that would have made a man overlook a greater misfortune than that of having married an heiress. "You are really the master of Sanbury, think of it what you may," pursued the fair bride. "It is my first deceit, and shall be my last. But when I found that, because Honoria was the elder, you took her for the richer cousin, I could not resist the temptation of this little surprise; and if you are angry, there," pointing to the side of the road, "sits one who will plead for me."

And suddenly, from the beautiful Gothic lodge, the gate belonging to which had been so arranged as to open with a pulley, arose the well-known sounds,

> "Here am I, poor Jack,
> Just come home from sea,
> With shiners in my sack,—
> Pray what d' ye think of me?"

And there sat poor Jack himself in all his glory, waving his hat over his grey head, with the tears streaming down his honest cheeks, absolutely tipsy with joy.

And before Captain Lyndham had sufficiently recovered from his astonishment to speak a word—indeed, whilst he was still clasping his lovely wife to his own warm heart, the carriage had reached the mansion, on the steps of which stood, in one happy group, her people and his; Captain Manning, Mrs. Lacy, and Honor, (then really beautiful in her smiling sympathy,) Mr. Singleton, (who, by good-luck, had just returned to England,) Mrs. Martin, and the little maid Patty, standing behind on the upper step, and looking two inches taller in her joy and delight.

So much for the Sailor's Wedding. There can be no need to say that the married life which sprang from such a beginning was as happy as it was prosperous.

COUNTRY EXCURSIONS.

Some celebrated writer (was it Addison?) cites, as a proof of the instinctive love of the country, which seems implanted in the human breast, the fact, that the poorest inhabitants of great cities cherish in their wretched garrets or cellars some dusty myrtle or withering geranium, something that vegetates and should be green; so that you shall see in the meanest window of the meanest street some flower or flowering plant stuck in a piece of broken crockery,—a true and genuine tribute to that inherent love of nature which makes a part of our very selves. I never see such a symptom of the yearning after green fields without recognising the strong tie of fellow-feeling with the poor inmate; and the more paltry the plant, the more complete and perfect is the sympathy.

There is a character in one of the old plays, (I think "The Jovial Crew," by Ben Jonson's servant, Broome,) who conducts himself like a calm, sedate, contented justice's clerk all the winter, but who, at the first sign of spring,

when the sap mounts into the trees, and the primrose blossoms in the coppices, feels the impulse of the season irresistible, obeys literally the fine stage-direction of the piece, "The nightingale calls without," and sallies forth to join the gipsies, to ramble all day in the green lanes, and sleep at night under the hedges.*

Now one of the greatest proofs of the truth of these delineations was to be found in the fact, that the quiet old ladies of Belford, the demure spinsters and bustling widows, to say nothing of their attendant beaux, were themselves seized, two or three times in the course of the summer, with the desire of a country excursion. It is true that they were not penned up like the poor artisans of London, or even the equally pitiable official personage of the old dramatist—they were not literally caged birds, and Belford was not London: on the contrary, most of them had little slips of garden-ground, dusty and smoky, where currants and gooseberries came to nothing, and even the sweet weed mignonette refused to blow; and many of them lived on the outskirts of the town, and might have walked country-ward if they would; but they were bound by the minute and strong chains of habit, and could turn no other way than to the street,—the dull, darksome, dingy street. Their feet had been so used to the pavement, that they had lost all relish for the elastic turf of the greensward. Even the road-side paths were too soft for their tread. Flagstones for them; and turf, although smooth, and fine, and thick, and springy as a Persian carpet—although fragrant and aromatic as a bed of thyme,—turf for those who liked it!

Two or three times in the year, however, even these street-loving ladies were visited with a desire to breathe a freer air, and become dames and damsel errants for the day. The great river that glided so magnificently under the ridge of the Upton hills, within a mile of the town, seemed to offer irresistible temptations to a water-party, the more so as some very fine points of river scenery were within reach, and the whole course of the stream, whether sweeping gradually along its own rich and open meadows, or shut in by steep woody banks, was marked with great and varied beauty. But, somehow or other, a water-party was too much for them. The river was navigable; and in that strange and almost startling process of being raised or sunken in the locks, there was a real or an apparent danger that would have discomposed their nerves and their dignity. Ladies of a certain age should not squall if they can help it. The spinsters of Belford had an instinctive perception of the truth of this axiom; and although Mr. Singleton, who liked the diversion of gudgeon-fishing, (the only fishing, as far as I can perceive, which requires neither trouble, nor patience, nor skill, and in which, if you put the line in, you are pretty sure within a few minutes to pull a fish out)—although Mr. Singleton, who liked this quiet sport, often tried to tempt his female friends into a sober water-frolic, he never could succeed. Water-parties were reserved for the families of the neighbourhood.

And perhaps the ladies of Belford were the wiser of the two. Far be it from me to depreciate the water! writing as I am at 4 o'clock, P. M. on the twenty-sixth of this hot, sunny, droughty August, 1834, in my own little garden—which has already emptied two ponds, and is likely to empty the brook,—my garden, the watering of which takes up half the time of three people, and which, although watered twice a day, does yet, poor thing! look thirsty—and, for my garden, prematurely shabby and old;† and who, dearly as I love that paradise of flowers, have yet, under the influence of the drought, and the heat, and the glare of the sunshine, been longing all day to be lying under the great oak by the pool, at our own old place, looking through the green green leaves, at the blue blue sky, and listening to the cattle as they plashed in the water; or better still, to be in Mr. Lawson's little boat—that boat which is the very model of shape and make, rowed by that boatmen of boatmen, and companion of companions, and friends of friends, up his own Loddon river, from the fishing-house at Aberleigh, his own beautiful Aberleigh, under the turfy terraces and majestic avenues of the park, and through that world of still, peaceful and secluded water meadows, where even the shy kingfisher, who retires before cultivation and population with the instinct of the Red Indian, is not afraid to make her nest, until we approach as nearly as in rowing we can approach to the main spring head (for, like the Nile, the Loddon has many sources,) of that dark, clear, and brimming river;—or, best perhaps of all, to be tossing about as we were last Wednesday, on the lake at Gore Mount, sailing, not rowing—that was too slow for our ambition—

* A friend of mine, one of the most accomplished and eloquent preachers in London, says, that as the spring advances, he feels exactly the yearning for the country described by the old dramatist. He does not join the gipsies; but he declares that it requires all the force of his mind, as well as the irresistible claims of the most binding of all professions, to detain him in London. Talk of slavery! Are we not all the bondsmen of circumstances, the thralls of conscience and of duty? Where is he that is free?

† Besides the great evils of a drought in the flower-garden, of dwarfing the blossoms—especially of the autumnal plants, lobelias, dahlias, &c., which may almost be called semi-aquatic, so fond are they of water—and robbing roses, honeysuckles, and even myrtles of their leaves,—the very watering, which is essential to their life, brings a host of enemies above ground and beneath, in the shape of birds of all sorts pecking after worms, and moles out of number following the watering-pot. We have caught four of these burrowing creatures to-day in my little garden.

sailing at the rate of ten knots an hour, under the guidance of the gallant Captain Lumley, revelling in the light breeze and the inspiring motion, delighted with the petty difficulties and the pleasant mistakes of our good-humoured crew — landsmen who did not even understand the language of their brave commander — now touching at an island, now weathering a cape, enjoying to its very height the varied loveliness of that loveliest spot, and only lamenting that the day *would* close, and we *must* land. I, for my part, could have been content to have floated on that lake for ever.

Far be it from me, who have been all the morning longing, panting as it were, for the water, for its freshness, its coolness, its calm repose, its vivid life, to depreciate water-parties! And yet, in this fickle climate of ours, where a warm summer is one rarity, and a dry summer is another, they are not often found to answer. To have a boat and a river as Mr. Lawson has, and his own thews and sinews for rowing, and his own good-will for the choice of time; or to command, as they do at Gore Mount, lake and boat and boatmen,* and party, so as to catch the breeze and the sunshine, and the humour and inclination of the company; to have, in short, the power of going when you like and how you like,—is the true way to enjoy the water. In a set expedition, arrranged a week or ten days beforehand, the weather is commonly wet, or it is cold, or it is showery, or it is thundery, or it threatens to be one or other of these bad things: and the aforesaid weather having no great reputation, those of the party who pique themselves on prudence shake their heads, and tap their barometers, and hum and ha, and finally stay at home. Or even if the weather be favourable, and the people well-assorted, (which by the by seldom happens,) twenty accidents may happen to derange the pleasure of the day. One of the most promising parties of that kind which I remember, was entirely upset by the casualty of casting anchor for dinner in the neighbourhood of three wasps' nests. Moving afterwards did no good, though, in mere despair, move of course we did. The harpies had got scent of the food, and followed and ate, and buzzed and stung, and poisoned all the comfort of the festival. There was nothing for it but to fling the dinner into the river, and row off home as fast as possible. And even if these sort of mishaps could be guarded against (which they cannot,) boating is essentially a youthful amusement. The gentlemen should be able to row upon occasion, and the ladies to sing; and a dance on the green is as necessary an accessory to a water-party as a ballet to an opera.

* Not indeed the Captain: that was an accidental felicity.

Now, as in spite of some occasional youthful visiter, some unlucky god-daughter, or much-to-be-pitied niece, the good ladies of Belford — those who formed its most select and exclusive society—were, it must be confessed, mostly of that age politely called uncertain, but which is to every eye, practised or unpractised, one of the most certain in the world; they did very wisely to eschew excursions on the broad river. Nobody not very sure of being picked up, should ever put herself in danger of falling overboard. No lady not sure of being listened to, should ever adventure the peril of a squall. Accordingly, they stuck firmly to *terra firma*.

The selection of places for a land expedition presented, however, considerable difficulties. One would have thought that the fair garrison of Belford might have made a sortie through any gate of the town, pretty much as it happened, sure of meeting everywhere good roads and pleasant spots in a country full of green pastoral valleys watered by clear winding streams, of breezy downs and shady woodlands. There was, however, always considerable hesitation, doubt, and delay in fixing on the favoured scene of their tranquil amusement. Perhaps this difficulty made a part of the pleasure, by prolonging the discussion and introducing those little interludes of *tracasserie*, and canvassing, and opposition—those pretty mockeries of care, which they who have no real trouble are often found to delight in, stirring the tranquil waters of a too calm existence, and setting intentionally the puddle in a storm.

"Why, if the castle be too far," grumbled Miss Arabella Morris to her sister, "why not go to the gardens at Wyndhurst? I dare say we could have our dinner in the Fishing-seat; and any thing would be better than that tiresome Warren House, where we have been for the last half-dozen years, and where there is no reason on earth for our going, that I can discover, except that Mrs. Colby's maid's father keeps the lodge, and that Dr. Fenwick likes the stewed carp. Why should we be managed by Mrs. Colby, I wonder? For my part, I have a great mind not to join the party."

"Only think of our going to the Warren House again!" said Lady Dixon, the not overrich widow of a corporation knight, to her cousin Miss Bates, who lived with her as a sort of humble companion; only think of that odious Warren House, when the Ruins are but three miles farther, and so much more agreeable—a pic-nic in the old walls!—how nice that would be this hot weather, among the ivy and ash trees, instead of being stewed up in the Warren House, just to please Mrs. Colby! It would serve her right if we were all to stay at home."

And Miss Bates gave, as usual, a dutiful assent; and yet Mrs. Colby had her way, and

to the Warren House they went — the two Misses Morris, Miss Blackall, Miss Bates, Lady Dixon, Mrs. Colby herself, and the beaux of the party.

Mrs. Colby was one of those persons whose indomitable self-will does contrive to carry all before it. She was a little, bustling woman, neither young nor old, neither pretty nor ugly; not lady-like, and yet by no means vulgar; certainly not well-read, but getting on all the better for her want of information,—not, as is the usual way, by pleading ignorance, and exaggerating and lamenting her deficiency—but by a genuine and masterful contempt of acquirement in others, which made educated people, if they happened to be modest, actually ashamed of their own cultivation: "I 'm no musician, thank God! Heaven be praised, I know nothing of poetry!" exclaimed Mrs. Colby; and her abashed hearers felt they had nothing to do but to "drown their books," and shut up the piano.

For this influence she was indebted entirely to her own force of character and her natural shrewdness of mind; since, so far were her pretensions to superiority from being borne out by fortune or position, that, moderately endowed with the gifts of fortune as her companions were, she was probably, by very much, the poorest amongst them, living in paltry lodgings with one solitary maid-servant; whilst upon the very ticklish points of birth and gentility, her claims were still more equivocal, she having now resided ten years at Belford without any one having yet discovered more of her history than that she was a widow: what her husband had been, or who was her father — whether she came from the east, the west, the north, or the south, still remained a mystery. Nobody had even been lucky enough to find out her maiden name.

Of one thing her acquaintances were pretty sure,—that if her family and connexions had been such as to do her credit in society, Mrs. Colby was not the woman to keep them concealed. Another fact appears to me equally certain,—that if any one of the gossiping sisterhood who applied themselves to the examination of her history, had been half as skilful in such inquiries as herself, the whole story of her life — her birth, parentage, and education — would have been laid open in a month. But they were simple inquisitors, bunglers in the great art of meddling with other people's concerns, and Mrs. Colby baffled their curiosity in the best of all ways — by seeming perfectly unconscious of having excited such a feeling.

So completely did she evade speaking of her own concerns, (a subject which most people find particularly agreeable,) that the fact of her widowhood had been rather inferred from the plain gold circlet on the third finger of the left hand, and a very rare and very slight mention of "poor Mr. Colby," than from any direct communication even to those with whom she was most intimate. Another fact was also inferred hy a few shrewd observers, who found amusement in watching the fair lady's manœuvres,—namely, that although when occasionally speaking of "poor Mr. Colby's" tastes and habits—such as his love of 'schalots with his beef-steak, and his predilection for red mullet — she had never failed to accompany those tender reminiscences with a decorous accompaniment of sighs and pensive looks, yet that she was by no means so devoted to the memory of her first husband, as to render her at all averse to the notion of a second. On the contrary, she was apparently exceedingly well-disposed to pay that sort of compliment to the happiness she had enjoyed in one marriage, which is comprised in an evident desire to try her fate in another. Whatever might have been her original name, it was quite clear to nice observers, that she would not entertain the slightest objection to change that which she at present bore, as soon as might be, provided always, that the exchange were, in a pecuniary point of view, sufficiently advantageous.

Nice observers, as I have said, remarked this; but we are not to imagine that Mrs. Colby was of that common and vulgar race of husband-hunters, whose snares are so obvious, and whose traps are so glaring, that the simplest bird that ever was caught in a springe can hardly fail to be aware of his danger. Our widow had too much tact for that. She went cautiously and delicately to work, advancing as stealthily as a parlour cat who meditates an attack upon the cream-jug, and drawing back as demurely as the aforesaid sagacious quadruped, when she perceives that the treasure is too well guarded, and that her attempts will end in detection and discomfiture.

It was only by slight indications that Mrs. Colby's designs became suspected:—for instance, her neighbour, Mr. Selwood, the attorney, lost his wife, and Mrs. Colby immediately became fond of children, spent a world of money in dolls and gingerbread, and having made herself popular amongst all the young ladies and gentlemen of Belford between the ages of eight and two, established a peculiar intimacy with Misses Mary and Eliza, and Masters John and Arthur Selwood; played at domino and cat's-cradle with the girls, at trap-ball and cricket with the boys; courted the nurse, was civil to the nursery-maid, and made as judicious an attack upon the papa's heart, through the medium of the children, as could well be devised. She failed, probably because that worthy person, Mr. John Selwood, attorney-at-law, was not much troubled with the commodity commonly called a heart. He was a kind father and a good-humoured man; but matrimony was with him as much a matter of business as with Mrs.

Colby, and, about fourteen months after the death of his wife, he brought home as his spouse a wealthy maiden from a distant county, who was far from professing any inordinate love for children in general, and had never set eyes upon his, but who, nevertheless, made as good a stepmother as if she had played at trap-ball and cat's-cradle all the days of her life.

Her next attempt was on a young physician, a bachelor, whose sister, who had hitherto kept his house, was on the point of marriage —an opportunity that seemed too good to be lost, there being no axiom more current in society than the necessity of a wife to a medical man. Accordingly, she had a severe illness and a miraculous recovery; declared that the doctor's skill and assiduity had saved her life, became his *prôneuse* in all the Belford coteries, got him two or three patients, and would certainly have caught her man, only that he happened to be Scotch, and was saved from the peril matrimonial by his national caution.

Then she fixed her eye on a recruiting officer, a man of some family, and reputed fortune; but he was Irish, and the national instinct saved him.

Then she turned her attention towards Mr. Singleton, who, dear man, soon let her know, with his accustomed simplicity, that he could not possibly marry till he got a living.

Then she resumed her fondness for children, which had lain in abeyance since Mr. Selwood's affair, on the occasion of an ex-curate of St. Stephen's setting up a higher class of preparatory school; but it turned out that he took the school to enable him to marry a woman whom he loved—and so that card failed her.

Then she turned sickly again, (delicate is the more lady-like phrase,) in order to be cured by the ale of a rich old bachelor brewer, and went about the town crying up his XX, as she had formerly done the doctor's drugs; and then (for of course she did not catch the old bachelor) she carried all Belford to buy bargains of a smart linendraper just set up in the market-place, and extolled his ribands and muslin with as much unction as she had bestowed on the brewer's beer, or the physician's prescriptions, or Mr. Selwood's boys and girls; but all in vain! The linendraper played her the worst trick of all. He was married already—married before ever he saw Belford, or was patronized by Mrs. Colby. N. B. —I cannot help thinking that these two last conjectures are rather super-subtle, and hold with another particular friend of the lady's, (for they could only have been her very particular friends who watched with such amusement and recorded with such fidelity her several failures and mortifications,) that her attentions to the XX and the linendrapery might be accounted for on other grounds; and that a desire to obtain a certain green shawl under prime cost, and a barrel of strong beer for nothing, in both which objects she succeeded, would supply a reasonable and characteristic motive for her puffery in both cases.

One thing is certain: that after the series of fruitless schemes which we have enumerated, Mrs. Colby seemed so far discouraged as to intermit, if not wholly relinquish, her designs on that ungrateful half of the creation called man, and to direct her entire attention to the softer-hearted and more impressible sex to which she herself belonged. Disappointed in love, she devoted herself, as the fashion is amongst ladies of her class, to an exclusive and by no means unprofitable friendship.

The friend on whom she pitched was one of the richest and simplest spinsters in all Belford. A good, harmless, comfortable woman, somewhat broader than she was high, round as a ball, smooth as satin, soft as silk, red as a rose, quiet as a dormouse, was Miss Blackall. Her age might be five-and-forty, or thereabout; and to any one who knew her small wit and easy fortune, it was matter of some surprise that she should have lived so many years in the world without becoming, in some form or other, the prey of one of the many swindlers with which the age abounds. She had, however, always been under some sort of tutelage, and had hitherto been lucky in her guardians. First of all, her father and mother took care of her; and, when they died, her brother and sister; they marrying, consigned her to a careful duenna, who bore the English title of lady's-maid; and, on her abdicating her post, Miss Blackall fell into the hands of Mrs. Colby.

The reason of Mrs. Tabitha's leaving a family over which she ruled with the absolute sway that in this country of freedom is so often conceded to a lady's-maid, (a race far more our mistresses than we are theirs,) was a quarrel with her lady's favourite parrot.

Vert-vert (for this accomplished feathered orator was named after the hero of Gresset's delightful poem) was a bird of singular acquirement and sagacity, almost rivalling the parrot of whom so curious and entertaining an account is given in Mr. Jesse's charming Gleanings in Natural History. There was a spirit of dialogue in Vert-vert's fluent talk which really implied his understanding what was said to him. Not only did he, like the Irish echo in the story, answer "Very well, I thank you," to "How d'ye do?" and so on with a hundred common questions—for that might proceed merely from an effort of memory—from his having (in theatrical phrase) a good study, and recollecting his cues as well as his part; but there was about him a power of holding a sustained and apparently spontaneous conversation, which might have occasioned much admiration, and some perplexity, in wiser women than Miss Blackall.

In the matter of personal identity he was never mistaken. He would call the whole household by name, and was never known to confound one individual with another. He was a capital mimic, and had the faculty, peculiar to that order of wits, of counterfeiting not merely tone and voice, and accent and expression, but even the sense or nonsense of the person imitated; spoke as if the same mind were acting upon the same organs, and poured forth not only such things as they had said, but such as they were likely to say. The good-natured twaddle and drawling non-ideas of his mistress, for instance, who had rather less sense and fewer words than an ordinary child of four years old; the sharp acidity of Mrs. Tabitha, who, with every body but her lady, and sometimes with her, was a shrew of the first water, the slip-slop and gossiping of the housemaid, the solemn self-importance of the cook, and the jargon and mingled simplicity and cunning of the black footman,—were all given to the life.

To the black footman Vert-vert had originally belonged, and it was mainly to the great fancy that Miss Blackall at first sight took to the bird, which, on offering himself as a candidate for her service, he had had the shrewdness to bring with him, that Pompey owed the honour and happiness of exhibiting his shining face and somewhat clumsy person in a flaming livery of white and scarlet and silver lace, which set off his sooty complexion with all the advantage of contrast. She bought the bird and hired the man; and from the first instant that Vert-vert's gorgeous cage swung in her drawing-room, the parrot became her prime favourite, and Mrs. Tabitha's influence was sensibly diminished.

That this might occasion in the mind of the soubrette an unusual portion of ill-will, (which amiable feeling we rational beings generally reserve for the benefit of our own species,) is beyond all manner of doubt; and the parrot, who, amongst his other extraordinary gifts, had his fancies and aversions, with cause and without, and loved and hated like any Christian—did not fail to return the compliment, and detested Mrs. Tabitha with all his heart. He was sure to bite her fingers whenever, in compliance with her lady's orders, she attempted to feed him; and mocked her, taunted her, and laughed at her in a manner which, as the unfortunate object of his jibes was wont to assert, was never heard of before in a feathered creature! Well was it for Vert-vert that the days of witchery were gone by, or, most assuredly, Tabitha would have arraigned him before the tribunals of the land, and have had him roasted, feathers and all, as something "no' canny!" I am far from certain that she, for her particular part, did not really suspect him of being something elfish or fiendish,—a sort of imp in disguise, sent into the world for her especial torment; and the sable colour of his quondam master served to confirm the impression.

The immediate cause of offence was, it must be confessed, provoking enough. "Tabitha! Tabitha! Tabitha!" ejaculated the bird one day from his cage on the landing-place, as the damsel in question was ascending the stairs; "Tabitha, you're an old fright!"

"What!" exclaimed the affronted damsel, remonstrating as if addressing a human being; "what is that you dare to say?"

"Look in the glass, Tabitha!" replied the parrot, swinging himself with great nonchalance in the sort of wire circle suspended from the centre of his large and commodious gilt cage: "Look in the glass, and you'll see a cross-grained, squinting, shrivelled old fright!"

The allusion to her personal defects—for squint she did, and shrivelled, alas! she was—increased, almost to frenzy, the ire of the incensed damsel. "Say that again," retorted she, "and I'll wring your head off!"

"Tabitha, you're an old fright!" repeated the bird; "a sour, cross-grained, shrivelled old fright, Tabitha!" said Vert-vert, swinging and nodding, and swaying his neck from side to side; "Look in the glass, Tabitha!"

And Tabitha was approaching the cage with dire intent, and Vert-vert might have rued his boldness, had not Miss Blackall from the drawing-room, and Pompey from the hall, rushed to the scene of contest, and rescued their favourite from the furious waiting-woman.

Too much irritated to be prudent, she at once gave the lady the choice of parting with herself or the parrot; and as there was no sort of comparison between the two in Miss Blackall's opinion, her warning was accepted, and off she went—all the sooner, because, during the short time she did stay in the house, her triumphant enemy continued to ejaculate, alternately, "Look in the glass, Tabitha!" and "Ugly, cross-grained, squinting old fright!"

How the bird came by these phrases was a mystery,—unless, indeed, Mrs. Colby, who wished the duenna away that she might succeed her in the management of her lady, might have had some hand in the business. Certain it was, that any sentence, sharply and pungently spoken, was pretty sure to be caught up by this accomplished speaker, and that his poor inoffensive mistress had several times got into scrapes by his reporting certain disagreeable little things which happened to be said in his presence, to the parties concerned. Vert-vert was the greatest scandal-monger in Belford; and every body, except the persons aggrieved, cherished him accordingly.

From this time forth, Mrs. Colby became a sort of guardianess to Miss Blackall. She slept, indeed, at her own lodgings, but she lived almost constantly with her friend; used her house, her carriage, her servants, her

table; protected her from mercenary suitors, and seemed to have entirely relinquished in her favour her own matrimonial designs—the more readily, perhaps, as her attempts in that line had been so singularly unfortunate.

Thus passed several years. At the time, however, of the meditated country excursion, Mrs. Colby had just admitted into her ever-teeming brain another well-laid scheme for changing her condition; and the choice of the Warren House, at which the other ladies grumbled so much, was made, not for the gratification of her servant, whose family kept the house, but for the furtherance of her own plans, which were, as yet, wholly unsuspected in Belford.

Dr. Fenwick loved the stewed carp of the Warren House, and to propitiate Dr. Fenwick was, at present, the great object of Mrs. Colby, although he was about the last person whom she would ever have intended to honour with her hand, being almost as poor as herself, and with no very great prospect of ever being richer.

The doctor was a burly, pompous personage, with large features, a large figure, a big voice, a slow, oracular mode of conversation, and a considerable portion of self-importance. What he could have been like when young, one can hardly imagine; nor was it very easy to guess at his present age, for ever since he first came to Belford, a dozen years before, he had seemed exactly the same heavy, parading, consequential Dr. Fenwick, with a buzz-wig and a shovel-hat, that he was at the moment of which we write. And yet this Strephon had been, in his time, as great a fortune-hunter as Mrs. Colby herself, and was said to have made, in one week, four offers, three of them being to Lady Dixon and the two Misses Morris. The swain was, however, soon discouraged, and for many years appeared to have given up any design of making his fortune by matrimony, as completely as Mrs. Colby herself.

For the rest, he was a good-natured man, with more sense than any one, judging from his egregious vanity, would have supposed. His way through life had been, although quite free from moral imputation, yet sufficiently out of the common course to hinder his professional advancement; since he had been, originally, an apothecary, then an army surgeon, then a physician with a Scotch diploma, and then, finding medicine unprofitable, he contrived, through some channel of interest, to get ordained, and now lived partly on his half-pay as army surgeon, and partly in officiating as an occasional preacher in the different parishes round about; for, in the pulpit, although somewhat coarse, he was forcible and not ineloquent, and there was a kindness and simplicity about the man, in the midst of his pomposity, his vanity, and his Epicurean tastes, which, together with his thorough inoffensiveness, and his blameless character, ensured him considerable attention from the leading persons in the town. He had many old friends, also, of a respectable class in society, at whose houses he frequently made long visits; and one of these, a gentleman of the name of Musgrave, descended, like the doctor, from an old family in the North, was, at this very time, his visiter in Belford, and the object of Mrs. Colby's secret hopes.

Mr. Musgrave was really a delightful person; shrewd, acute, lively, rich, and not at all too young or too handsome to make the union preposterous on the score of appearance. Since his arrival, too, the gentlemen had been assiduous in their visits and attentions; they had dined at Mrs. Blackall's in company with Mr. Singleton, the day before the excursion. Vert-vert, aided, it was to be presumed, by a little prompting, had vociferated on their names being announced,—"He 's a fine preacher, Doctor Fenwick! Mr. Musgrave 's a charming man!"—at which Mrs. Colby had blushed and cried "Fie!" and the doctor had chuckled, and the simple hostess had laughed, and Mr. Musgrave had given his friend a glance of much meaning; symptoms which were renewed more than once in the course of the evening, as the parrot, according to his general habit, was so pleased with his new phrase that he repeated it over and over again, until, fearing that even good, unsuspecting Mr. Singleton might take more notice than she wished, Mrs. Colby threw a green cloth over the cage, and the bird, after wishing the company "good night!" composed himself to rest.

The next day was as fine as ever blessed an English party in chase of pleasure, and the company set forth in three carriages; Lady Dixon and Mr. Singleton in the Miss Morrises' coach; Mrs. Colby, with Miss Blackall, in her chariot; and Dr. Fenwick and Mr. Musgrave in a well-appointed curricle, (the fashionable vehicle of the day,) belonging to the latter. Vert-vert and Miss Bates were left behind.

Arrived at the place of destination, the first business of this rural party was to discuss the stewed carp, the roast lamb, the ducks and green peas, and strawberries and cream, provided for their refreshment; their second was to enjoy, after the several ways, the beautiful scenery amongst which they found themselves. Mr. Singleton, Lady Dixon, and the Misses Morris preferred the mode of sitting down to a rubber in the close room in which they had dined; the other four sallied forth into the air, Mrs. Colby taking Mr. Musgrave's arm, and Miss Blackall leaning on the doctor.

The more alert and active pair soon outstripped their heavier companions, and led the way across a narrow strip of broken common, with old pollards scattered here and there, into a noble tract of woodland scenery,

majestic oaks and elms, and beeches rising from thickets of the weeping birch, the hornbeam, the hawthorn, and the holly, variegated with the brier rose and the wild honeysuckle, bordered with fern and foxglove, and terminated by a magnificent piece of water, almost a lake, whose picturesque shores, indented by lawny bays and wooded headlands, were as calm and tranquil as if the foot of man had never invaded their delicious solitude. Except the song of the wood-pigeon, the squirrel leaping from bough to bough overhead, and the shy rabbit darting across the path, the silence was unbroken; and Mr. Musgrave and Mrs. Colby, who had the tact to praise, if not the taste to admire, the loveliness of the scene, found a seat on the fantastic roots of a great beech, and talked of the beauties of nature until summoned by the care of good Mr. Singleton to partake of a syllabub under the cow, with which the ruralities of the day were to conclude.

On their return home, a slight difference was proposed by Mr. Musgrave in their travelling arrangements: Mrs. Colby accompanied him in his curricle, and Dr. Fenwick took her place in Miss Blackall's carriage. The prospect seemed most promising:—but, alas for the vanity of human expectations! Mr. Musgrave did not propose to Mrs. Colby; and Dr. Fenwick, encouraged by Vert-vert's hint, did propose to Miss Blackall,—and was accepted on the spot, and married within the month; and poor Mrs. Colby was fain to smother her disappointment, and smile through the bridal festivities, and teach Vert-vert to drink to the new-married couple, and draw bride-cake through the wedding-ring.

THE YOUNG SCULPTOR.

For some time after the dreadful catastrophe of the poor Abbé, the Friary Cottage was deserted by all except Mrs. Duval and poor Louis. The vulgar appetite for the horrible, in all its ghastly and disgusting detail, had not been so fully awakened then as it has been since by repeated exhibitions of murder in melo-dramas on the stage, and even in penny and twopenny shows at fairs and revels—or by the still more exciting particulars, (with wood-cuts to illustrate the letter-press,) in the Sunday papers. Belford was too far from London to attract the hordes of inquisitive strangers, who flocked from the metropolis to Elstree, to contemplate the lane where Thurtell slew his victim, or the house where the dreadful scene was planned; and, to do the inhabitants of our town justice, the popular feeling both there and in the neighbourhood was one comprising too much genuine pity for the good old man, so inoffensive, so kind, and so defenceless — too much indignation against his murderer, and too sincere a sympathy with his avengers, (for as such Louis and Bijou were considered,) to admit of the base alloy of vulgar curiosity. Every body would have been glad, to be sure, to make acquaintance with the boy and the dog who had cut so distinguished a figure in the justice-room,—to know, and, if possible, to serve them; but there was a sort of respect—young lad and pastry-cook's son though he were—which forbade an intrusion on a grief so deep and so recent; so that the gentry contented themselves with raising a handsome subscription for the boy, and patronizing his mother in the way of her trade; whilst the common people satisfied their feeling of justice by attending the execution of Wilson, and purchasing and commenting on the "Last dying Speech and Confession," which was written, and printed, and distributed for sale by some ingenious speculator in such commodities, the night before it purported to be spoken, and some copies actually vended in the country villages, owing to a mistake of the time of execution, some hours before the criminal was brought out upon the scaffold. Having so assuaged their indignation, the excitement gradually subsided, and the murder of the poor priest sank into oblivion, like other tales of horror, a mere nine days' wonder! One impression only seemed permanent: a shuddering aversion to pass at night, or even by day, the picturesque ruins amongst which he had dwelt, and in the consecrated grounds belonging to which his remains, in pursuance of a wish which he had expressed only a few weeks before the fatal night, had been interred. The persons who avoided the spot would have been puzzled to tell why, for it had been a favourite rendezvous with the inhabitants of Belford — a walk for the grown-up, a playground for the children; why they shunned it they could hardly have told, unless they had answered, in the words of the great poet, that

"Something ail'd it now—the place was cursed."

Mrs. Duval fretted over this desertion; not so much from any decline in her business, for from the large orders of the neighbouring gentry she had as much as she could well manage; but because her cheerful and social disposition felt the loneliness oppressive. It almost seemed, she said, as if the folk ran away from her; besides, she thought it too melancholy, (*unked* was her word — and a most expressive word it is, combining loneliness, melancholy, dreariness, and vacuity—a more intense and positive feeling of mental weariness than *ennui*,) she thought it too unked for a boy of Louis's age, and wished to take advantage of her improved circumstances, and remove into the interior of the town, where her son would be near an excellent day-school, at which she proposed to place

him, and would be in the way of cheerful society in an evening. But Louis, with an obstinacy very unlike his general character, positively refused to leave the Friary Cottage. The violence of his grief had of course abated after the detection and the execution of the murderer, and more particularly after he had ascertained, not merely from Wilson's confession, but from the corroborating testimony of Miss Smith's maid, that her carelessly mentioning in a shop to which she was sent to get change for a five-pound note, that her mistress wanted gold to make up the amount of some money, which she was going to pay to the old French master, had been overheard by this ruffian, who was himself in the shop making some small purchase, and had been the actual cause of the murder. This discovery was an indescribable relief to Louis, who had been haunted by the fear that his own dear mother's unguarded expressions of terror at M. l'Abbé's intended return at night, and with a charge of money, after her repeated cautions and her dream, which story she had related at full length to every creature whom she had seen during the day, had in some way or other been the occasion of this horrible catastrophe. To be so fully assured that her indiscretion had not produced this tremendous result, proved an unspeakable comfort to the thoughtful and sensitive boy; but still his grief, although it had changed its violent and tumultuous character, and seemed fast settling into a fixed though gentle melancholy, appeared rather to increase than diminish. He shrunk from society of all kinds, especially the company of children, and evidently suffered so much both in mind and body when forced from his beloved solitude, that his fond mother, fearful of risking the health, if not the life, of this precious and only child, at length desisted from the struggle and left him to pursue his own inclinations in peace, much to the annoyance of Stephen Lane, who, having taken a great fancy to the boy, from the part he had acted in the discovery of the poor Abbé's body, and the detection of the murderer, had resolved to be his friend through life, and wished to begin his kindness at that very *now*, by putting him to school, or binding him apprentice, and gave the preference to the latter mode of proceeding.

"Talk of his delicacy!" exclaimed the good butcher to poor Mrs. Duval, in a loud earnest tone, which, kind as his meaning was, and good-humoured as was the speaker, did certainly sound a little like the voice of a man in a passion. "His delicacy, forsooth! Won't your coddling make him more delicate? Delicacy! Nobody ever talked of such nonsense when I was a youngster. Why, before I was his age, I was head-boy with old Jackson, my wife's father that now is,—used to be up between three and four of a morning, and down to the yard to help the men slaughter the beasts; then back again to the Butts, to open the windows and sweep the shop; then help cut out, then carry home the town orders;—I should like to see Louis with such a tray of meat upon his head as I used to trot about with and think nothing of it!—then carry out the country orders, galloping with my tray before me like mad, ay, half over the county at a sweep; then drive the cart to fetch home the calves; then see to the horses; then feed the beasts; then shut up shop; then take a scamper through the streets for my own diversion; go to bed as fresh as a four-year-old, and sleep like a top. There's a day's work for you! Just send Louis down to the Butts, and I'll make a man of him; take him 'prentice for nothing, feed and clothe and lodge him, and mayhap, by and by, give him a share of the business. Only send him to me."

"But, Mr. Lane," interposed Mrs. Duval, "poor Louis does not like butchering; he has not the heart to kill a worm, and would never do in that line of business, I'm sure."

"More fool he!" ejaculated Stephen. "Heart, indeed! As if butchers were harder-hearted than other folk! I'll tell you what, Mrs. Duval, no good will come to the boy whilst you let him sit moping all day with a book in his hand amongst those ruins. Move yourself off! Get into the middle of the town, and wean him from that dismal place altogether. Delicate, quotha! Well he may, such a life as he leads there, sitting upon the poor old man's grave along with the little dog, just like two figures on a tombstone. As to the poor brute, I don't blame him, because 't is his instinct, poor dumb thing, and he can't help it; but Louis can—or you can for him, if you will. Dang it!" continued the honest butcher, warming as he pursued his harangue; "dang it! you women folk are all alike, young and old. There is my daughter Bessy—I caught her this very morning coaxing young Master Stephen to let the maid wash him, and my young gentleman squalled, and kicked, and roared, and would have coaxed and scolded, if he could but ha' spoke; and mother, and grandmother, and nurse, were all going to put off the washing till another time, for fear of throwing the urchin into fits, he being delicate, forsooth! when I came in and settled the matter, by whipping up young master, and flinging him into the water-tub in the yard before you could say 'Jack Robinson;' and Dr. Davies says I was right, and that my sousing will do the boy more good than all their coddling with warm water. So the young gentleman is to be ducked every morning, and the doctor says that in a month he'll have cheeks like a rose. Now this is what you should do with Louis."

"What! duck him!" inquired Mrs. Duval, smiling.

"No, woman!" replied Stephen, waxing wroth, "but get away from this dreary place,

and fling him amongst other boys. Put him to school for a year or two, if he is such a fool as not to like the butchering line; I'll pay the expense, and we'll see what else we can put him to when he's of a proper age. Only leave that old Friary. No good can come to either of you whilst you stay there."

"Well, and I wish to leave the ruins, I assure you, Mr. Lane, and I cannot thank you enough for your kindness towards Louis," returned the affectionate mother; "but the poor boy falls sick if he's taken away for a day; and then sometimes I think he may be right, on account of my dream."

"Your dream!" exclaimed Stephen. "Is the woman mad?"

"Did you never hear," resumed Mrs. Duval, taking no notice of this civil ejaculation, "that I dreamt of Louis' finding a pot of gold in the ruins? and you know how true my dream about the wolves falling upon the poor Abbé turned out—so that I sometimes think——"

"The woman's crazy!" interrupted Mr. Lane, sailing off; for this discussion had taken place at the small gate leading up to the cottage:—"she's madder than a March hare! one might as well attempt to drive a herd of wild bulls along the turnpike road, as to bring her round to common sense; so she may manage matters her own way, for I've done with her." And off marched Stephen Lane.

His description of Louis and Bijou was not much unlike the truth. The faithful dog, with the remarkable instinct which characterizes his race, lay for hours and hours on the simple flag-stone marked only with his name and the date of his death (that of his birth being unknown) which covered the remains of his master. And, reclining beside him on the same stone, sat his equally faithful companion, sometimes reading one of the good Abbé's books, which unclaimed by any relation, and no will having been found, had been consigned by the local authorities to the care of Mrs. Duval; sometimes pursuing, with irregular but successful ardour, the studies marked out for him by his venerable instructor; and often sketching designs for a monument, which it was the object of his affectionate day-dreams to erect to his memory. Gradually, however, his designs extended to other objects. Louis's talent for drawing was remarkable; and as he had inherited a little of his mother's superstition—and encouraged, it may be, in the present instance, by the verification of the bad dream, had formed his own version of the good—the pencil soon became his principal occupation. If Stephen Lane had heard to the end of the story of dreaming of a pot of gold, and finding an old paint-pot, and had happened to have had any faith in the legend, he would have construed it differently, and have bound Louis upon the spot either to a glazier and house-painter, or to an oil and colourman: but the boy, as I said before, put his private interpretation on the vision, and as prophecies sometimes work their own accomplishment, so did it bid fair to prove in this case, since by repeated and assiduous and careful copying of the romantic buildings and the fine natural scenery about him, he was laying the foundation of an artist's education, by at once acquiring facility and certainty of drawing, and a taste for the beautiful and the picturesque. Thus occupied, and with the finest books in French literature—and Louis read French like English, and some of the easier classics to occupy him—he never had dared to open the Horace which seemed like a sacred legacy,—days and weeks passed on, and, with no apparent change in the habits, a silent amelioration was taking place in the mind of the pensive boy, on whom time was working its usual healing effect, taking the sting from grief and the bitterness from memory, ("the strong hours conquer us"—why should we resist them?) when a circumstance occurred, which tended more than anything could have done to divert his attention and soothe his sorrow.—A new lodger offered himself at the Friary Cottage, and of all the lodgers that could have been devised, one the most congenial to his disposition, and the most calculated to foster and encourage his predominant pursuit.

He was sitting among the ruins as usual, one fine morning early in May, attempting, for the twentieth time, to imitate on paper the picturesque forms, and the contrasted, yet harmonious, colouring of a broken arch garlanded with ivy, whose dark shining wreaths had straggled from the old stone-work to a tall pear-tree in full blossom that overhung it, breaking with its pale green leaves and its ivory blossoms the deep blue of the almost cloudless sky,—when his mother called him to a young gentleman, who wished, she said, to sketch the great window, and who, after sufficient conversation with her to prove his good-breeding and good feeling, sat down to the task which had so often taxed the poor boy's simple skill. The stranger brought to it talent, practice, taste. The work grew under his hand, and in two hours, which seemed but two minutes to Louis, to whom he had been talking most kindly during the greater part of the time, he produced a drawing, free, vigorous, and masterly beyond any that his youthful admirer had ever beheld.

"You must be a great artist!" exclaimed the boy, involuntarily, returning the sketch after a long examination, his eyes sparkling, and his cheeks glowing with generous fervour; "for as young as you look, you must be some great painter."

"Not a painter, certainly, nor a great artist," replied the stranger, smiling. "I am a young sculptor, or rather a student of sculpture,

driven by medical advice into the country, and in search of some cheap, quiet, airy lodging; — if your apartments are vacant, and your mother would venture to take into her house an unknown youth—" And, in five minutes, the affair was settled, and Henry Warner established as an inhabitant of the Friary Cottage.

To a boy like Louis the companionship of such a person as Henry Warner—for, in spite of the differences of station, age, and acquirement, companions they speedily became — proved not only an almost immediate cure for his melancholy, but an excellent although unconscious education.

The young sculptor was that rare thing, a man of genius, and of genius refined and heightened by cultivation. His father had been a clerk in a public office, and having only one other child, an elder daughter comfortably married in her own rank of life, he devoted all that could be spared of his own income to the improvement of his promising boy, sending him first to a public school, then to the Royal Academy, and from thence to Italy; but even at the moment that he was rejoicing over a printed letter dated Rome, which mentioned Henry Warner as likely to become a second Canova, apoplexy, caused, perhaps, by the very excess of pleasurable excitement, seized him with that one fatal, and therefore merciful grasp, with which that tremendous disease sometimes sweeps away the hardiest and the strongest. He died, leaving his beloved son to struggle with the penury which he was by nature and by temperament peculiarly unfitted either to endure or to surmount.

On his return to England, Henry found himself alone in the world. His mother had long been dead; and his sister, a well-meaning, but vulgar-minded person, differing from him in appearance, intellect, and character— as we often see, yet always with something like surprise, in children of the same parents —and married to a man still coarser than herself, had no thought or feeling in common with him, could not comprehend his hopes, and was more than half tempted to class his habits of patient observation, of strenuous thought, and of silent study, under the one sweeping name of idleness. She could not understand the repetition of effort and of failure which so often lead to the highest excellence; and, disappointed in the sympathy of his only relation—the sympathy which, above all others, would have soothed him, our young artist, after collecting the small remains of his father's property, withdrew from a house where he suspected himself to be no longer welcome, and plunged at once into the mighty sea of London.

His first outset was unexpectedly prosperous. A nobleman of acknowledged taste, whom he had met at Rome, not only purchased a bust of the Grecian Helen, in which he found or fancied a resemblance to his youngest and favourite child, but engaged him to accompany his family to their country-seat, and execute a group of his two daughters, then on the point of marriage.

The group was most successfully begun— one figure quite finished, and the other nearly so, and the nuptials of the elder sister were celebrated with all due splendour, and adorned by the varied talents of the accomplished sculptor, who united strong musical taste to a slight turn for lyrical poetry, and poured forth his united gifts with unbounded prodigality on this happy occasion. But, a few days before that fixed for the marriage of the young and lovely Lady Isabel, the artist, whose manner had latterly assumed a reckless gaiety little in accordance with his gentle and modest character, suddenly quitted the Hall, leaving behind him the fine work of art, now so near its completion, and a letter to the Earl, which excited strange and mingled feelings in the breast of his noble patron. " Wayward, presumptuous, yet honourable boy !" was his internal exclamation, as the open and artless questions of the unconscious Isabel, who wondered with a pretty and almost childish innocence why a person whom she liked so much should leave her figure unfinished and run away from her wedding, convinced the anxious father that the happiness of his favourite child was uninjured. The nuptials were solemnized; the noble family returned to Italy; and Henry Warner, retiring to his London lodgings, strove to bury thought and recollection in an entire and absorbing devotion to his great and noble art.

From this point, his history was but a series of misfortunes—of trembling hopes, of bitter disappointments, of consuming anxiety, and final despair. Every one knows the difficulty with which excellence in art bursts, often as it seems by some casual accident, through the darkness of obscurity and the crowd of competition. Doubtless many a one has felt, as Henry Warner felt, the aching, burning consciousness of unrecognised genius—the agonizing aspiration after the fame, always within view, yet always eluding his pursuit. Mr. Moore, in one of the finest songs that even he ever wrote, has depicted a glittering vessel, laden with fairy treasures, sailing lightly over a summer sea, followed by a little boat rowed by one single mariner, closely chasing, yet never overtaking, the phantom bark. The sun rises, and the sun sets, and still sees the magic ship floating onward, and the solitary boatman labouring after at one unvaried distance, ever near, but never nearer — wearing away life and strength for an illusion that mocks whilst it allures. That lonely mariner might be the type of many an artist of high but unacknowledged talent, more especially of many a young sculptor, since in that pure and

lofty branch of art there is no room for second-rate merit, no middle path between hopeless obscurity and splendid reputation.

To attain this proud eminence was not the destiny of Henry Warner. With funds almost exhausted, a broken constitution, and a half-broken heart, he left the great city—so dreary and so desolate to those who live alone, uncheered by bosom sympathy, unsoothed by home affection—and retired to Belford, as his medical adviser said, to recruit his health — as his own desponding spirit whispered, to die!

At the Friary Cottage he found unexpected comfort. The quiet was delightful to him; the situation, at once melancholy and picturesque, fell in with his taste and his feelings; and with the cheerful kindness of Mrs. Duval and the ardent admiration of her enthusiastic boy, it was impossible not to be gratified.

Henry was himself one of those gifted persons who seem born to command affection. The griefs that were festering at the core, never appeared upon the surface. There all was gentle, placid, smiling, almost gay; and the quickness with which he felt, and the sweetness with which he acknowledged, any trifling attention, would have won colder hearts than those of Louis and his mother. The tender charm of his smile and the sunny look of his dark eyes were singularly pleasing, and without being regularly handsome, his whole countenance had a charm more captivating than beauty. Sweetness and youthfulness formed its prevailing expression, as grace was the characteristic of his slight and almost boyish figure; although a phrenologist would have traced much both of loftiness and power in the Shaksperian pile of forehead and the finely-moulded head.

His conversation was gentle and unpretending, and occasionally, when betrayed into speaking on his own art, fervent and enthusiastic. He talked little, as one who had lived much alone, preferring to turn over the French and Latin books of which the poor Abbé's small library consisted, or buried in "Haley's Essay on Sculpture," a chance-found volume, of which not merely the subject, but the feelings under which the poem was written, particularly interested him;* or forming plans for new works, which, under the temporary revival caused by change of scene, and of air, he in his happier moments began to think it possible that he might live to complete.

His great pleasure, however, was in rambling with Louis through the lanes and meadows, now in the very prime and pride of May, green and flowery to the eye, cool and elastic to the tread, fresh and fragrant to the scent, pleasant to every sense; or in being rowed by him in a little boat (and Louis was a skilful and indefatigable waterman) amongst the remotest recesses of the great river; between beech-woods with the sunbeams wandering with such an interchange of light and shadow over the unspeakable beauty of their fresh young tops; or through narrow channels hemmed in by turfy hills and bowery islets, beautiful solitudes from which the world and the world's woe seemed excluded, and they and their little boat sole tenants of the bright water, into whose bosom the blue sky shone so peacefully, and whose slow current half seemed to bear along the slender boughs of the weeping willow as they stopped to kiss the stream.

In such a scene as this, Henry's soothed spirit would sometimes burst into song—such song as Louis felt no one had ever heard before. It was in truth a style of singing as rare as it was exquisite, in which effect was completely sacrificed to expression, and the melody, however beautiful, seemed merely an adjunct to the most perfect and delicious recitation. Perhaps none but the writer of the words (and yet, considered as poetry, the words were trifling enough) could have afforded to make that round and mellow voice, and that consummate knowledge of music, that extraordinary union of taste and execution, so entirely secondary to the feeling of the verse.

One great charm of Henry's singing was its spontaneity—the manner in which, excited by the merest trifle, it gushed forth in the middle of conversation, or broke out after a long silence. "How sweetly that skylark sings!" cried Louis one morning, laying aside his oar that he might listen at his ease—"and the deep-soothing cooing of the wood-pigeon, and the sighing of the wind, and the rippling of the waters! How delightful are all natural sounds!"

"Ay," rejoined Henry—

> "There is a pure and holy spell
> In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell:
> The pleasant hum of the early bee,
> As she plies her cheerful industry;

*The Letters on Sculpture were addressed to Flaxman, whose pupil, Thomas Haley, the poet's only son, was, during the time of their composition, rapidly declining of a lingering and painful disease. He did actually die between the completion and the publication of the poem; and the true and strong expression of the father's grief for the sufferings and death of this amiable and promising youth, is to me singularly affecting. It is very old-fashioned to like the writings of Haley, who paid in the latter part of his career the usual penalty for having been over-praised in his earlier days, and is now seldom mentioned but as an object of ridicule and scorn; but, set aside the great and varied learning of his notes, I cannot help feeling some kindness for the accomplished and elegant scholar who in his greater works, the Essays on History, on Epic Poetry, on Painting, and on Sculpture, has communicated so agreeably, so rich a store of information, and whose own observations are always so just, so candid, and so honourable—so full of a tempered love of liberty, and of the highest and purest admiration for all that is great and beautiful in literature or in art.

The whir of the mailed beetle's wing,
Sailing heavily by at evening;
And the nightingale, so poets say,
Wooing the rose in his matchless lay.

There is a pure and holy spell
In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell;
The Indian shell, whose faithful strain
Echoes the song of the distant main;
The streamlet gurgling through the trees,
The welcome song of the cool night-breeze;
The cataract loud, the tempest high,
Hath each its thrilling melody."

"Yes," continued Louis, after warmly thanking the singer — for though the matter was little, the manner was much — "Yes! and how much beauty there is in almost every scene, if people had but the faculty, not of looking for it—that were too much to expect —but of seeing it when it lies before them. Look at the corner of that meadow as it comes sloping down to the water, with the cattle clustered under the great oak, and that little thicket of flowery hawthorn and shining holly, and golden-blossomed brown, with the tangled sheepwalk threading it, and forming a bower fit for any princess."

Again Henry answered in song:

"She lay beneath the forest shade
As 'midst its leaves a lily fair—
Sleeping she lay, young Kalasrade,
Nor dreamt that mortal hover'd there.
All as she slept, a sudden smile
Play'd round her lips in dimpling grace,
And softest blushes glanced the while
In roseate beauty o'er her face;
And then those blushes pass'd away
From her pure cheek, and Kalasrade
Pale as a new-blown lily lay,
Slumbering beneath the forest shade.

Oh! lovely was that blush so meek,
That smile half playful, half demure,
And lovelier still that pallid cheek—
That look so gentle, yet so pure.
I left her in her purity,
Slumbering beneath the forest glade;
I fear'd to meet her waking eye,
The young, the timid Kalasrade.
I left her; yet by day, by night,
Dwells in my soul that image fair,
Madd'ning as thoughts of past delight,
As guilty hope, as fierce despair."

"Is that subject quite imaginary?" Louis at last ventured to inquire, taking care, however, from an instinctive delicacy, that he would have found it difficult to account for, to resume his oar and turn away from Henry as he spoke—"or did you ever really see a sleeping beauty in a bower, such as I was fancying just now?"

"It is and it is not imaginary, Louis," replied Henry, sighing deeply; "or rather, it is a fancy piece, grounded, as rhymes and pictures often are, on some slight foundation of truth. Wandering in the neighbourhood of Rome, I strayed accidentally into the private grounds of an English nobleman, and saw a beautiful girl sleeping as I have described under a bay tree, in the terraced Italian garden. I withdrew as silently as possible, the more so as I saw another young lady, her sister, approaching, who, in endeavouring to dispose a branch of the bay-tree, so as to shelter the fair sleeper from the sun, awakened her."

"What a subject for a group!" exclaimed Louis. "Did you never attempt to model the two sisters?"

"It is a fine subject," replied Henry; "and it has been attempted, but not completed. Do you not remember singling out a sketch of the recumbent figure, the other day, when you were turning over my drawings?"

"Yes, and saying how like it was to the exquisite bust marked 'ΕΛΕΝΗ. — Helena! But all your female figures are more or less like that Helen. She is your goddess of beauty."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Henry. "But where are we now? Is this the old church of Castlebar which you were promising to show me, with its beautiful tower, and the great yew trees? Yes, it must be. You are right in your admiration, Louis. That tower is beautiful, with its fine old masonry, the quaint fantastic brickwork left, to the honour of the rector's taste, in the rich tinting of its own weather-stains, undaubed by whitewash, and contrasting so gracefully with the vivid foliage of that row of tall limes behind. A strange tree for a churchyard, Louis, the honeyed, tasselled lime! And yet how often we see it there blending with the dark funeral yew—like life with death! I should like to be buried there."

"Nay," said Louis, "a churchyard is sometimes devoted to gayer purposes than burials. Hark! even now!" and as he spoke the bells struck up a merry peal, the church-door opened, and the little procession of a rustic wedding, — the benign clergyman looking good wishes, the smirking clerk, the hearty jolly bridal-father, the simpering bride-maidens, the laughing bridesmen—and the pretty, blushing, modest bride, listening with tearful smiles to the fond and happy lover-husband, on whose arm she hung—issued from the porch. "I should like just such a wife as that myself," added Louis, talking of marrying as a clever boy of thirteen likes to talk;* "should not you?"

* It was somewhere about that ripe age that a very clever friend of mine, travelling in the North with a young clergyman, his private tutor, wrote to his mother a letter beginning as follows:

"*Gretna Green, Thursday.*

"My dear mother,—Here we are, in the very land of love and matrimony; and it is a thousand pities that my little wife is not here with us, for Mr. G. being at hand, we could strike up a wedding without loss of time, and my father and Mr. D. would have nothing to do but to settle the income and the dowry at their leisure." So lightly are those matters considered at thirteen! At three-and-thirty, the case is altered.

But Henry made no answer—he was musing on another wedding; and after a silence of some duration, in the course of which they had rowed away almost out of hearing of the joyous peal that still echoed merrily from the church-tower, he broke again into song:

"Forth the lovely bride ye bring:
Gayest flowers before her fling,
From your high-piled baskets spread,
Maidens of the fairy tread!
Strew them far and wide, and high,
A rosy shower 'twixt earth and sky,
Strew about! strew about!
Larkspur trim, and poppy dyed,
And freak'd carnation's bursting pride,
Strew about! strew about!
Dark-eyed pinks, with fringes light,
Rich geraniums, clustering bright,
Strew about! strew about!
Flaunting pea, and harebell blue,
And damask-rose, of deepest hue,
And purest lilies, Maidens, strew!
Strew about! strew about!

Home the lovely bride ye bring:
Choicest flowers before her fling,
Till dizzying streams of rich perfume
Fill the lofty banquet room!
Strew the tender citron there;
The crush'd magnolia proud and rare,
Strew about! strew about!
Orange blossoms newly dropp'd,
Chains from high acacia cropp'd,
Strew about! strew about!
Pale musk-rose, so light and fine,
Cloves and stars of jessamine,
Strew about! strew about!
Tops of myrtle, wet with dew,
Nipp'd where the leaflet sprouts anew,
Fragrant bay-leaves, Maidens, strew,
Strew about! strew about."*

Louis was about to utter some expression of admiration, which the ringing, air, and the exquisite taste and lightness of the singing, well deserved, when he perceived that the artist, absorbed in his own feelings and recollections, was totally unconscious of his presence. Under the influence of such associations, he sang, with a short pause between them, the two following airs:

"They bid me strike the harp once more,
My gayest song they bid me pour,
In pealing notes of minstrel pride
They bid me hail Sir Hubert's bride.
Alas! alas! the nuptial strain
Faltering I try and try in vain;
'Twas pleasant once to wake its spell—
But not for Lady Isabel.

They bid me vaunt in lordly lay
Sir Hubert's mien and spirit gay,
His wide demesnes and lineage high,
And all the pride of chivalry.
Alas! alas! the knightly lay
In trembling murmurs dies away;
'T were sweet the warrior's fame to tell—
But not to Lady Isabel.

They bid me blend in tenderest song
The lover's fears, unutter'd long,
With the bold bridegroom's rapturous glee,
And vows of endless constancy.
Alas! alas! my voice no more
Can tale of happy passion pour;
To love, to joy, a long farewell!—
Yet blessings on thee, Isabel!"

"Bless thee! I may no longer stay!
No longer bid thee think on me;
I cannot 'bide the bridal day—
But, Helen, I go blessing thee.

Bless thee! no vow of thine is broke;
I ask'd not thy dear love for me;
Though tears and sighs and blushes spoke—
Yet, Helen, I go blessing thee.

Bless thee! yet do not quite forget;
Oh, sometimes, sometimes pity me!
My sun of life is early set—
But, Helen, I die blessing thee."

And then the minstrel sank into a silence too sad and too profound for Louis to venture to interrupt, and the lady—for Kalasrade, Isabel, or Helena, ('ΕΛΕΝΗ,) was clearly one—the Helen of the lover's thought was never again mentioned between them.

His spirits, however, continued to amend, although his health was fluctuating; and having, at length, fixed on the Procession in honour of Pan, from Keats's "Endymion," as the subject of a great work in basso-relievo, and having contrived, with Louis' assistance, to fit up a shed in the most retired part of the ruins, as a sort of out-of-door studio, he fell to work with the clay and the modelling tools with an ardour and intensity partaking, perhaps, equally of the strength of youth and the fever of disease, of hope and of despair.

These mixed feelings were in nothing more evinced than in the choice of his subject; for eminently suited as the passage in question† undoubtedly was to his own classical taste and graceful execution, it is certain that he was attracted to the author, not merely by his unequal and fitful genius, his extraordinary pictorial and plastic power, but by a sympathy, an instinctive sympathy, with his destiny. Keats had died young, and with his talent unacknowledged,—and so he felt should he.

In the mean while, he laboured strenuously at the Endymion, relinquishing his excursions on the water, and confining his walks to an evening ramble on Sunham Common, pleased to watch Bijou (who had transferred to our artist much of the allegiance which he had formerly paid to his old master, and even preferred him to Louis) frisking among the gorse, or gambolling along the shores of the deep irregular pools, which, mingled with islets of cottages and cottage-gardens, form so picturesque a foreground to the rich landscapes beyond.

Better still did he love to seek the deep

* This song and one or two of the others belong to two forthcoming operas, already set to music under the auspices of the authoress. She has thought it right to mention this fact to prevent the possibility of their being selected for such an honour by any other composer.

* Vide note 1, at the end of the paper.

solitude of the double avenue of old oaks that skirted the upper part of the common; and there—

"Like hermit, near his cross of stone,
To pace at eve the silent turf alone,
And softly breathe, or inly muse a prayer."
*Rhymed Plea for Tolerance.**

More fitting place for such meditation he could hardly have found than that broad avenue of columned trunks, the boughs arching over his head, a natural temple! the shadows falling heavily as between the pillared aisles of some dim cathedral, and the sunbeams just glinting through the massive foliage, as if piercing the Gothic tracery of some pictured window. The wind came sweeping along the branches, with a sound at once solemn and soothing; and to a mind high-wrought and fancy-fraught as Henry's, the very song of the birds, as they sought their nests in the high trees, had something pure and holy as a vesper-hymn.

The sweetest hour in all the day to Henry Warner was that of his solitary walk in the avenue. Quite solitary it was always; for Louis had discovered that this was the only pleasure which his friend wished to enjoy unshared, and with instinctive delicacy contrived to keep away at that hour.

The only person who ever accosted Henry on these occasions was our good friend Stephen Lane, who used sometimes to meet him when returning from his farm, and who, won first by his countenance, and then by his manner, and a little, perhaps, by the close but often unsuspected approximation which exists between the perfectly simple and the highly refined, had taken what he called a fancy to the lad, and even forgave him for prognosticating that Louis would some day or other be a painter of no common order,—that he had the feeling of beauty and the eye for colour, the inborn taste and the strong love of art which indicate genius. "So much the worse!" thought our friend Stephen; but such was the respect excited by the young artist's gentleness and sweetness, that, free-spoken as he generally was on all matters, the good butcher, on this solitary occasion, kept his thoughts to himself.

In strenuous application to the Procession, and lonely twilight walks, the summer and part of the autumn passed away. One bright October evening, Stephen, who had been absent for some weeks on a visit to a married daughter, met the young sculptor in his usual haunt, Sunham Avenue, and was struck with the alteration in his appearance. Crabbe has described such an alteration with his usual graphic felicity.

"Then his thin cheek assumed a deadly hue,
And all the rose to one small spot withdrew:
They call'd it hectic; 't was a fiery flush
More fix'd and deeper than the maiden blush;
His paler lips the pearly teeth disclosed,
And lab'ring lungs the lengthened speech opposed."
Parish Register.

But, perhaps, Haley's account of his son still more resembles Henry Warner, because it adds the mind's strength to the body's attenuation. "Couldst thou see him now"—he is addressing Flaxman—

"Thou might'st suppose I had before thee brought
A Christian martyr, by Ghiberti wrought,
So pain has crush'd his form with dire control,
And so the seraph Patience arm'd his soul."
Letters on Sculpture.

He was leaning against a tree in the full light of the bright Hunter's moon, when Stephen accosted him with his usual rough kindness, and insisted on his accepting the support of his stout arm to help him home. Henry took it gratefully; in truth, he could hardly have walked that distance without such an aid; and for some time they walked on slowly and in silence; the bright moonbeams checkering the avenue, sleeping on the moss-grown thatch of the cottage roofs, and playing with a silvery radiance on the clear ponds that starred the common. It was a beautiful scene, and Henry lingered to look upon it, when his companion, admonished by the fallen leaves damp and dewy under foot, and the night wind sighing through the trees, begged him not to loiter, chiding him, as gently as Stephen could chide, for coming so far at such an hour.

"It was foolish," replied Henry; "but I love these trees, and I shall never see them again." And then he smiled, and began talking cheerfully of the bright moonbeams, and their fine effect upon the water; and Stephen drew the back of his hard huge hand across his eyes, and thought himself a great fool, and wondered how sweet smiles and hopeful happy words should make one sad; and when an acorn dropped from a tree at his feet, and the natural thought passed through his mind, "Poor youth, so he will fall!" Stephen had nothing for it but to hem away the choking sensation in his throat, and began to lecture the invalid in good earnest.

After landing him safely in his own parlour, and charging Louis to take care of his friend, Stephen drew his good hostess to the gate of her little garden:

"This poor lad must have the best advice, Mrs. Duval."

"Oh, Mr. Lane! he won't hear of it. The expense——"

* A poem of which (if it were not presumptuous in me to praise such a work) I should say, that it united the pregnant sense and the beautiful versification of Pope, the eloquent philosophy of Wordsworth, the wide humanity of Scott, and the fervent holiness of Cowper, with a spirit of charity all its own. That little volume is a just proof (if such were needed) how entirely intellect of the very highest class belongs to virtue. The work is out of print: must it continue so? Is it quite consistent in one imbued with so sincere a love for his fellow-creatures to withhold from them such an overflowing source of profit and delight?

"Hang the expense, woman! he *shall* have advice," reiterated Stephen; "he must and he shall."

"Oh, Mr. Lane! I have begged and entreated," rejoined Mrs. Duval, "and so has Louis. But the expense! For all he pays me so regularly, I am sure that he is poor—very poor. He lives upon next to nothing; and is so uneasy if I get him any little thing better than ordinary;—and Louis caught him the other day arranging his drawings and casts, and putting up his books, and writing letters about them to some gentleman in London, to pay for his funeral, he said, and save me trouble after he was dead:—I thought Louis would have broken his heart. He reckoned upon selling that fine work in the shed here—the Procession—I forget what they call it, and it's almost finished; but he's too weak to work upon it now, and I know that it frets him, though he never utters a complaint. And then, if he dies, my poor boy will die too!"

"Could not one manage to make him take some money, somehow, as a loan, or a gift?" inquired Stephen, his hand involuntarily seeking his breeches-pocket, and pulling out a well-laden canvass bag.

"No," replied Mrs. Duval, "that's impossible. The poorer he gets, the prouder he grows. You could no more get him to take money than to send for a doctor."

"Dang it! he shall, though," returned honest Stephen. "We'll see about that in the morning. In the mean while, do you go home with me, and see if you and my mistress can't find something that the poor lad will like. She has been making some knick-knacks today, I know, for little Peggy, our granddaughter, who has been ill, and whom we have brought home for change of air. Doubtless, there'll be some to spare,—and if there is not, he wants it worst."

And in a half an hour Mrs. Duval returned to the Friary Cottage, laden with old wine and niceties of all sorts from the well-furnished store closet, and a large basin of jelly of dear Mrs. Lane's own making. Ill as he was, and capricious as is a sick man's appetite, our invalid, who, like every body that had ever seen her, loved Margaret Lane, could not reject the viands which came so recommended.

The next morning saw Stephen an unexpected visiter in the young sculptor's studio, fixed in wondering admiration before the great work. "A procession in honour of Pan!" repeated the good butcher. "Well, I'm no great judge, to be sure, but I like it, young man; and I'll tell you why I like it, because it's full of spirit and life, like; the folk are all *moving*. Dang it! look at that horse's head! how he's tossing it back! And that girl's petticoat, how light and dancy it seems! And that lamb, poking its little head out of the basket,—ay, that's right, bleat away! One would think you had been as much amongst them as I have."

Henry was charmed at Stephen's criticism, and frankly told him so.

"Well, then!" continued Mr. Lane, "since you think me such a good judge of your handiwork, you must let me buy it.* Tell me your price," added he, pulling out an enormous brown leathern book, well stuffed with bank-notes; "I'm the man for a quick bargain."

"Buy the relievo! But, my dear Mr. Lane, what will you do with it?" replied the artist. "Handsome as your new house at Sunham is, this requires space, and distance, and——"

"I'm not going to put it in any house of mine, I promise you, my lad," replied Mr. Lane, half affronted. "I hope I know better what is fitting for a plain tradesman; and if I don't, my Margaret does. But I'll tell you what I mean to do with it," continued he, recovering his good-humour,—"it was my wife's thought. I shall make a present of it to the corporation, to put up in the town-hall. I've been a rare plague to them all my life, and it is but handsome, now that I am going away as far as Sunham, to make up with them; so I shall send them this as a parting gift. Dang it! how well it'll look in the old hall!" shouted he, drowning with his loud exclamations poor Henry's earnest thanks, and unfeigned reluctance—for Henry felt the real motive of a purchase so much out of the good butcher's way, and tried to combat his resolution. "I will have it, I tell you! But I make one condition, that you'll see a doctor this very day, and that you are not to touch the Procession again till he gives you leave. I certainly sha'n't send it them till the spring. And now tell me the price, for have it I will!"

And the price was settled, though with considerable difficulty, of an unusual kind; the estimate of the patron being much higher than that of the artist. The purchase was completed—but the work was never finished: for before the last acorn fell, Stephen's forebodings were accomplished, and the young sculptor and his many sorrows, his hopes, his fears, his high aspirations, and his unhappy love, were laid at rest in the peaceful grave. The only work of his now remaining at Belford is a monument to the memory of the poor Abbé, executed from one of Louis's most simple designs.

Note 1.—The poetry of John Keats is, like all poetry of a very high style and very unequal execution, so much more talked of than really known, that I am tempted to add the Hymn to Pan, as well as the Procession, which is necessary to the comprehension of my little story. Perhaps it is the finest and most characteristic specimen that could be found of his wonderful pictorial power.

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* Vide note 2, at the end of the paper.

PROCESSION AND HYMN IN HONOUR OF PAN.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,
Bearing the burden of a shepherd-song;
Each having a white wicker overbrimm'd
With April's tender younglings: next, well-trimm'd,
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books;
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'erflowing die
In music through the vales of Thessaly:
Some idly trail'd their sheep-hooks on the ground,
And some kept up a shrill and mellow sound
With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,
A venerable priest full soberly
Begirt, with ministering looks: always his eye,
Steadfast upon the matted turf he kept,
And after him his sacred vestments swept.
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white,
Of mingled wine out-sparkling generous light;
And in his left he held a basket full
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull;
Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
Seem'd like a poll of ivy, in the teeth
Of Winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,
Up-followed by a multitude that rear'd
Their voices to the clouds, a fair-wrought car,
Easily rolling, so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown.
Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng; his youth was fully blown,
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown;
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftain-king's: beneath his breast, half bare,
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen,
A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd
To common lookers-on like one who dream'd
Of idleness in groves Elysian:
But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether-lip,
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
Through his forgotten hands: then would they sigh,
And think of yellow leaves, of owlet's cry,
Of logs piled solemnly.—Ah, well-a-day!
Why should our young Endymion pine away?

Soon the assembly, in a circle ranged,
Stood silent round the shrine: each look was changed
To sudden veneration: women meek
Beckon'd their sons to silence: while each cheek
Of virgin-bloom paled gently for slight fear;
Endymion, too, without a forest peer,
Stood wan and pale, and with an unawed face,
Among his brothers of the mountain-chase.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,
And, after lifting up his aged hands,
Thus spake he:—"Men of Latmos! shepherd bands!
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains; whether come
From valleys where the pipe is never dumb;
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
Blue harebells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibble their fill at Ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn,
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn:
Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare
The scrip with needments for the mountain air;
And all ye gentle girls, who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup
Will put choice honey for a favour'd youth:
Yea, every one attend! for, in good truth,
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide plains
Speckled with countless fleeces? Have not rains
Green'd over April's lap? No howling sad
Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had
Great bounty from Endymion, our lord.
The earth is glad: the merry lark has pour'd
His early song against yon breezy sky,
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire;
Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod
With wine, in honour of the Shepherd-god.
Now, while the earth was drinking it, and while
Bay-leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
Spread greyly eastward, thus a chorus sang:

"O thou! whose mighty palace-roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;
Who lovest to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken,
And through whole solemn hours dost sit and hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds,
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;
Bethinking thee how melancholy loath
Thou wert to lose fair Syrinx—dost thou now,
By thy love's milky brow,
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan!

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet turtles
Passion their voices cooingly among myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows that out-skirt the side
Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom
Broad-leaved fig-trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow-girted bees
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas
Their fairest-blossom'd beans and poppied corn;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee; low-creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness; pent-up butterflies
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh-budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O Forester divine!

"Thou to whom every faun and satyr flies
For willing service; whether to surprise
The squatted hare, while in half-sleeping fit;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewilder'd Shepherds to their path again;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping
The while they pelt each other on the crown
With silvery oak-apples and fir-cones brown;—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O Satyr-King!

"Oh hearkener to the loud-clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A lamb goes bleating: winder of the horn,
When snorting wild-boars, routing tender corn,

Anger our huntsmen; breather round our farms
To keep off mildews and all weather harms:
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds
That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors:
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope!
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows!—
Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourn of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven
That, spreading in this dull and clodded earth,
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth:
Be still a symbol of immensity;
A firmament reflected in a sea;
An element filling the space between;
An unknown—but no more: we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads lowly bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven-rending,
Conjure thee to receive our humble pæan
Upon thy mount Lycean!"

Everwhile they brought the burden to a close
A shout from the whole multitude arose
That linger'd in the air like dying rolls
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,
Young companions nimbly began dancing
To the swift treble pipe and humming string:
Ay, those fair living forms swam heavenly
To tunes forgotten, out of memory;
Fair creatures, whose young children's children bred
Thermopylæ its heroes, not yet dead,
But in old marbles ever beautiful.

KEATS'S *Endymion.*

Note 2.—Let not Stephen Lane's conduct be called unnatural! I do verily believe that there is no instance that can be invented of generosity and delicacy that might not find a parallel amongst the middle classes of England, the affluent tradesmen of the metropolis and the great towns, who often act as if they held their riches on the tenure of benevolence.

With regard to Stephen Lane's purchase, I happen to be furnished with a most excellent precedent—a case completely in point, and of very recent occurrence. It was told to me, and most charmingly told, by one whom I am proud to be permitted to call my friend, the Lady Madalina Palmer, who related the story with the delightful warmth with which generous people speak of generosity;—and I have now before me a letter from one of the parties concerned, which states the matter better still. But that letter I must not transcribe, and Lady Madalina is too far off to dictate to me in the pretty Scotch, which, from her, one likes better than English; so that I am fain to record the naked facts as simply and as briefly as possible, leaving them to produce their own effect on those who love the arts, and who admire a warm-hearted liberality in every rank of life.

Some time in November 1831, Mr. Cribb, an ornamental gilder in London, a superb artist in *his* line, and employed in the most delicate and finest work by the Duke of Devonshire and other men of taste amongst the high nobility, was struck with a small picture—a cattle piece—in a shop-window in Greek Street. On inquiring for the artist, he could hear no tidings of him; but the people of the shop promised to find him out. Time after time our persevering lover of the arts called to repeat his inquiries, but always unsuccessfully, until about three months after, when he found that the person he sought was a Mr. Thomas Sydney Cooper, an English artist, who had been for many years settled at Brussels as a drawing-master, but had been driven from that city by the revolution, which had deprived him of his pupils, amongst whom were some members of the Royal Family, and, unable to obtain employment in London as a cattle painter, had, with the generous self-devotion which most ennobles a man of genius, supported his family by making lithographic drawings of fashionable caps and bonnets,—I suppose as a puff for some milliner, or some periodical which deals in costumes. In the midst of this interesting family, and of these caps and bonnets, Mr. Cribb found him; and deriving from what he saw of his sketches and drawings additional conviction of his genius, immediately commissioned him to paint him a picture on his own subject and at his own price, making such an advance as the richest artist would not scruple to accept on a commission, conjuring him to leave off caps and bonnets, and foretelling his future eminence. Mr. Cribb says he shall never forget the delight of Mr. Cooper's face when he gave the order—he has a right to the luxury of such a recollection. Well! the picture was completed, and when completed, our friend Mr. Cribb, who is not a man to do *his* work by halves, bespoke a companion, and, while that was painting, showed the first to a great number of artists and gentlemen, who all agreed in expressing the strongest admiration, and in wondering where the painter could have been hidden. Before the second picture was half finished, a Mr. Carpenter (I believe that I am right in the name) gave Mr. Cooper a commission for a piece, which was exhibited in May, 1833, at the Suffolk Street Gallery; and from that moment orders poured in, and the artist's fortune is made.

It is right to add, that Mr. Cooper was generously eager to have this story made known, and Mr. Cribb as generously averse from its publication. But surely it ought to be recorded, for the example's sake, and for their mutual honour. I ought also to say, that it is only in heart, and pocket, and station, that Mr. Cribb resembles my butcher; the former being evidently a man of fair education and excellent taste. Oh! that I could have printed his account of this matter! It was so natural, so *naif*, so characteristic, so amusing. I dared not commit such a trespass

on the sacredness of private communication; but I shall keep it to my dying day, and leave it to my heirs; so that if hereafter, some sixty years hence, a future Allan Cunningham (if there can ever be another biographer like him) shall delight the world with another series of Lives of the Painters, the history of the English Paul Potter may be adorned and illustrated by the warm-hearted and graphic narrative of his earliest patron.

BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM, No. II.

MATCH-MAKING.

The proudest of all our proud country gentlewomen, — she who would most thoroughly have disdained the unlucky town ladies, who are destined to look on brick walls instead of green trees, and to tread on stone pavements instead of gravel walks, — was, beyond all doubt, my good friend Mrs. Leslie.

Many years ago, a family of that name came to reside in our neighbourhood, and being persons thoroughly *comme il faut*, who had taken, on a long lease, the commodious and creditable mansion called Hallenden Hall, with its large park-like paddock, its gardens, greenhouses, conservatories, and so forth, and who evidently intended to live in a style suited to their habitation,—were immediately visited by the inmates of all the courts, manors, parks, places, lodges, and castles within reach.

Mr. Leslie was, as was soon discovered, a man of ancient family and good estate, who had left his own county on the loss of a contested election, or some such cause of disgust, and had passed the last few years in London for the education of his daughters. He was, too, that exceedingly acceptable and somewhat rare thing, a lively, talking, agreeable man, very clever and a little quaint, and making his conversation tell as much by a certain off-handedness of phrase and manner, as by the shrewdness of his observations, and his extensive knowledge of the world. He had also, besides his pleasantry and good-humour, another prime requisite for country popularity; although greatly above the general run of his neighbours in intellect, he much resembled them in his tastes;—loved shooting, fishing, and hunting in the morning; liked good dinners, good wine, and a snug rubber at night; farmed with a rather less loss of money than usually befalls a gentleman; was a stanch partisan at vestries and turnpike meetings; a keen politician at the reading-room and the club; frequented races and coursing meetings; had a fancy for the more business-like gaieties of sessions and grand juries; accepted a lieutenancy in the troop of yeoman cavalry, and actually served as churchwarden during the second year of his residence in the parish. At a word, he was an active, stirring, bustling, personage, whose life of mind and thorough unaffectedness made him universally acceptable to rich and poor. At first sight there was a homeliness about him, a carelessness of appearance and absence of pretension, which rather troubled his more aristocratic compeers; but the gentleman was so evident in all that he said or did, in tone and accent, act and word, that his little peculiarities were speedily forgotten, or only remembered to make him still more cordially liked.

If Mr. Leslie erred on the side of unpretendingness, his wife took good care not to follow his example: she had pretensions enough of all sorts to have set up twenty fine ladies out of her mere superfluity. The niece of an Irish baron and the sister of a Scotch countess, she fairly wearied all her acquaintance with the titles of her relatives. "My uncle, Lord Linton—my brother-in-law, the Earl of Paisley," and all the Lady Lucys, Lady Elizabeths, Lady Janes, and Lady Marys of the one noble house, and the honourable masters and misses of the other, were twanged in the ears of her husband, children, servants, and visiters, every day and all day long. She could not say that the weather was fine without quoting my lord, or order dinner without referring to my lady. This peculiarity was the pleasure, the amusement of her life. Its business was to display, and if possible to marry her daughters; and I think she cherished her grand connexions the more, as being, in some sort, implements or accessories in her designs upon rich bachelors, than for any other cause; since, greatly as she idolized rank in her own family, she had seen too much of its disadvantages when allied with poverty, not to give a strong preference to wealth in the grand pursuit of husband-hunting. She would, to be sure, have had no objection to an affluent peer for a son-in-law, had such a thing offered; but as the commodity, not too common anywhere, was particularly scarce in our county, she wisely addressed herself to the higher order of country squires, men of acres who inherited large territories and fine places, or men of money who came by purchase into similar possessions, together with their immediate heirs, leaving the younger brothers of the nobility, in common with all other younger brothers, unsought and uncared-for.

Except in the grand matters of pedigrees and match-making, my good friend Mrs. Leslie was a sufficiently common person; rather vulgar and dowdy in the morning, when, like many country gentlewomen of her age and class, she made amends for unnecessary finery by more unnecessary shabbiness, and trotted about the place in an old brown stuff gown, much resembling the garment called a Joseph worn by our great-grandmothers, surmounted by a weather-beaten straw-bonnet and a sunburnt bay wig; and particularly stately in an

evening, when silks and satins made after the newest fashion, caps radiant with flowers, hats waving with feathers, chandelier ear-rings, and ermine-lined cloak, the costly gift of a diplomatic relation—("My cousin, the envoy," rivalled in her talk even "my sister the countess")—converted her at a stroke into a chaperon of the very first water.

Her daughters, Barbara and Caroline, were pretty girls enough, and would probably have been far prettier, had Nature, in their case, only been allowed fair play. As it was, they had been laced and braced, and drilled and starved, and kept from the touch of sun, or air, or fire, until they had become too slender, too upright, too delicate, both in figure and complexion. To my eye they always looked as if they had been originally intended to have been plumper and taller, with more colour in their cheeks, more spring and vigour in their motions, more of health and life about them, poor things! Nevertheless, they were prettyish girls, with fine hair, fine eyes, fine teeth, and an expression of native good-humour, which, by great luck, their preposterous education had not been able to eradicate.

Certainly, if an injudicious education could have spoilt young persons naturally well-tempered and well-disposed, these poor girls would have sunk under its evil influence. From seven years old to seventeen, they had been trained for display and for conquest, and could have played without ear, sung without voice, and drawn without eye, against any misses of their inches in the county. Never were accomplishments more thoroughly travestied. Barbara, besides the usual young-lady iniquities of the organ, the piano, the harp, and the guitar, distended her little cheeks like a trumpeter, by blowing the flute and the flageolet; whilst her sister, who had not breath for the wind instruments, encroached in a different way on the musical prerogative of man, by playing most outrageously on the fiddle—a female Paganini!

They painted in all sorts of styles, from "the human face divine," in oils, crayons, and miniatures, down to birds and butterflies, so that the whole house was a series of exhibition-rooms; the walls were hung with their figures and landscapes, the tables covered with their sketches; you sat upon their performances in the shape of chair-cushions, and trod on them in the form of ottomans. A family likeness reigned throughout these productions. Various in style, but alike in badness, all were distinguished by the same uniform unsuccess. Nor did they confine their attempts to the fine arts. There was no end to their misdoings. They japanned boxes, embroidered work-bags, gilded picture-frames, constructed pincushions, bound books, and made shoes. For universality the admirable Crichton was a joke to them. There was nothing in which they had not failed.

During one winter (and winter is the season of a country belle) Mrs. Leslie traded upon her daughters' accomplishments. Every morning visit was an exhibition, every dinner-party a concert, and the unlucky assistants looked, listened, yawned, and lied, and got away as soon as possible, according to the most approved fashion in such cases. Half-a-year's experience, however, convinced the prudent mamma that acquirements alone would not suffice for her purpose; and having obtained for the Miss Leslies the desirable reputation of being the most accomplished young ladies in the neighbourhood, she relinquished the proud but unprofitable pleasure of exhibition, and wisely addressed herself to the more hopeful task of humouring the fancies and flattering the vanity of others.

In this pursuit she displayed a degree of zeal, perseverance, and resource, worthy of a better cause. Not a bachelor of fortune within twenty miles, but Mrs. Leslie took care to be informed of his tastes and habits, and to offer one or other of her fair nymphs to his notice, after the manner most likely to attract his attention and fall in with his ways. Thus, for a whole season, Bab (in spite of the danger to her complexion) hunted with the Copley hounds, riding and fencing* to admiration — not in chase of the fox, poor girl, for which she cared as little as any she in Christendom—but to catch, if it might be, that eminent and wealthy Nimrod, Sir Thomas Copley, — who, after all, governed by that law of contrast which so often presides over the connubial destiny, married a town beauty, who never mounted a horse in her life, and would have fainted at the notion of leaping a five-barred gate; whilst Caroline, with equal disregard to her looks, was set to feed poultry, milk cows, make butter, and walk over ploughed fields with Squire Thornley, an agriculturist of the old school, who declared that his wife should understand the conduct of a farm as well as of a house, and followed up his maxim by marrying his dairy-maid. They studied mathematics to please a Cambridge scholar, and made verses to attract a literary lord; taught Sunday schools and attended missionary meetings to strike the serious; and frequented balls, concerts, archery clubs, and water-parties to charm the gay; were everything to everybody, seen everywhere, known to every one; and yet at the end of three years were, in spite of jaunts to Brighton, Cheltenham, and London, a trip to Paris, and a tour through Switzerland, just as likely to remain the two accomplished Miss Leslies as

* By "fencing," I do not mean here practising "the noble science of defence," but something, sooth to say, almost as manly. I use the word in its fox-hunting sense, and intend by it that Miss Barbara took flying leaps over hedges and ditches, and five-barred gates.

ever they had been. To "wither on the virgin stalk," seemed their destiny.

How this happened is difficult to tell. The provoked mother laid the fault partly on the inertness of her husband, who, to say truth, had watched her manœuvres with some amusement, but without using the slightest means to assist her schemes; and partly on the refractoriness of her son and heir, a young gentleman who, although sent first to Eton, most aristocratic of public schools, and then to Christ Church, most lordly of colleges, with the especial maternal injunction to form good connexions, so that he might pick up an heiress for himself and men of fortune for his sisters, had, with unexampled perversity, cultivated the friendship of the clever, the entertaining, and the poor, and was now on the point of leaving Oxford without having made a single acquaintance worth knowing. "This, this was the unkindest cut of all;" for Richard, a lad of good person and lively parts, had always been in her secret soul his mother's favourite; and now, to find him turn round on her, and join his father in laying the blame of her several defeats on her own bad generalship and want of art to conceal her designs, was really too vexatious, especially as Barbara and Caroline, who had hitherto been patterns of filial obedience, entering blindly into all her objects and doing their best to bring them to bear, now began to show symptoms of being ashamed of the unmaidenly forwardness into which they had been betrayed, and even to form a resolution (especially Barbara, who had more of her father's and brother's sense than the good-natured but simple Caroline) not to join in such manœuvring again. "It cannot be right in me, mamma," said she one day, "to practise pistol-shooting* with Mr. Greville, when no other lady does so; and therefore, if you please, I shall not go—I am sure you cannot wish me to do any thing not right."

"Particularly as there's no use in it," added Richard: "fire as often as you may, you'll never hit that mark."

And Mr. Greville and the pistol-shooting were given up; and Mrs. Leslie felt her authority shaken.

Affairs were in this posture, when the arrival of a visiter after her own heart—young, rich, unmarried, and a baronet—renewed the hopes of our match-maker.

For some months they had had at Hallenden Hall a very unpretending, but in my mind a very amiable inmate, Mary Morland, the only daughter of Mr. Leslie's only sister, who, her parents being dead, and herself and her brother left in indigent circumstances, had accepted her uncle's invitation to reside in his family as long as it suited her convenience, and was now on the point of departing to keep her brother's house,—a young clergyman recently ordained, who intended to eke out the scanty income of his curacy by taking pupils, for which arduous office he was eminently qualified by his excellent private character and high scholastic attainments.

Mary Morland was that very delightful thing, an unaffected, intelligent young woman, well-read, well-informed, lively and conversable. She had a good deal of her uncle's acuteness and talent, and a vein of pleasantry, which differed from his only as much as pleasantry feminine ought to differ from pleasantry masculine: he was humorous, and she was arch. I do not know that I ever heard any thing more agreeable than her flow of sprightly talk, always light and sparkling, spirited and easy, often rich in literary allusion, *but never degenerating* into pretension or pedantry. She was entirely devoid of the usual young lady accomplishments; (an unspeakable relief in that house!) neither played, nor sung, nor drew, nor danced; made no demand on praise, no claim on admiration, and was as totally free from display as from affectation in the exercise of her great conversational power. Such a person is sure to be missed, go where she may; and every one capable of appreciating her many engaging qualities felt, with Mr. Leslie, that her loss would be irreparable at Hallenden.

The evil day however arrived, as such days are wont to arrive, all too soon. William Morland was actually come to carry his sister to their distant home; for they were of the "North countrie," and his curacy was situate in far Northumberland. He was accompanied by an old schoolfellow and intimate friend, in whose carriage Mary and himself were to perform their long journey; and it was on this kind companion, rich and young, a baronet and a bachelor, that Mrs. Leslie at once set her heart for a son-in-law.

Her manœuvres began the very evening of his arrival. She had been kind to Miss Morland from the moment she ascertained that she was a plain though lady-like woman of six-and-twenty, wholly unaccomplished in her sense of the word, and altogether the most unlikely person in the world to rival her two belles. She had been always kind to "poor dear Mary," as she called her; but as soon as she beheld Sir Arthur Selby, she became the very fondest of aunts, insisted that Barbara should furnish her wardrobe, and Caroline paint her portrait, and that the whole party should stay until these operations were satisfactorily concluded.

Sir Arthur, who seemed to entertain a great regard and affection for his two friends,—who, the only children of the clergyman of

*That ladies should practise pistol-shooting is not so incredible as it seems. A very beautiful bride of the highest rank is said to have beguiled the ennui of the honeymoon by pursuing this recreation, in company with her most noble and most simple spouse.

the parish, had been his old companions and playmates at the manor-house, and from whom he had been parted during a long tour in Greece, Italy, and Spain,—consented with a very good grace to this arrangement; the more so as, himself a lively and clever man, he perceived, apparently with great amusement, the designs of his hostess, and for the first two or three days humoured them with much drollery; affecting to be an epicure, that she might pass off her cook's excellent confectionary for Miss Caroline's handiwork; and even pretending to have sprained his ankle, that he might divert himself by observing in how many ways the same fair lady—who, something younger, rather prettier, and far more docile than her sister, had been selected by Mrs. Leslie for his intended bride—would be pressed by that accomplished match-maker into his service; handing him his coffee, for instance, fetching him books and newspapers, offering him her arm when he rose from the sofa, following him about with footstools, cushions, and ottomans, and waiting on him just like a valet or a page in female attire.

At the end of that period,—from some unexplained change of feeling, whether respect for his friend William Morland, or weariness of acting a part so unsuited to him, or some relenting in favour of the young lady,—he threw off at once his lameness and his affectation, and resumed his own singularly natural and delightful manner. I saw a great deal of him, for my father's family and the Selbys had intermarried once or twice in every century since the Conquest; and though it might have puzzled a genealogist to decide how near or how distant was the relationship, yet, as amongst North-country folk "blood is warmer than water," we continued not only to call cousins, but to entertain much of the kindly feeling by which family connexion often is, and always should be, accompanied. My father and Mr. Leslie had always been intimate, and Mary Morland and myself having taken a strong liking to each other, we met at one house or the other, almost every day; and, accustomed as I was, to watch the progress of Mrs. Leslie's manœuvres, the rise, decline, and fall of her several schemes, I soon perceived that her hopes and plans were in full activity on the present occasion.

It was, indeed, perfectly evident that she expected to hail Caroline as Lady Selby before many months were past; and she had more reason for the belief than had often happened to her, inasmuch as Sir Arthur not only yielded with the best possible grace to her repeated entreaties for the postponement of his journey, but actually paid the young lady considerable attention, watching the progress of her portrait of Miss Morland, and aiding her not only by advice but assistance, to the unspeakable benefit of the painting, and even carrying his complaisance so far as to ask her to sing every evening,—he being the very first person who had ever voluntarily caused the issue of those notes, which more resembled the screaming of a macaw than the tones of a human being. To be sure, he did not listen,—that would have been too much to expect from mortal; but he not only regularly requested her to sing, but took care, by suggesting single songs, to prevent her sister from singing with her,—who, thus left to her own devices, used to sit in a corner listening to William Morland with a sincerity and earnestness of attention very different from the make-believe admiration which she had been used to show by her mamma's orders to the clever men of fortune whom she had been put forward to attract. That Mrs. Leslie did not see what was going forward in that quarter, was marvellous; but her whole soul was engrossed by the desire to clutch Sir Arthur, and so long as he called on Caroline for bravura after bravura, for scena after scena, she was happy.

Mr. Leslie, usually wholly inattentive to such proceedings, was on this occasion more clear-sighted. He asked Mary Morland one day "whether she knew what her brother and Sir Arthur were about?" and, on her blushing and hesitating in a manner very unusual with her, added, chucking her under the chin, "A word to the wise is enough, my queen; I am not quite a fool, whatever your aunt may be, and so you may tell the young gentlemen."

And with that speech he walked off.

The next morning brought a still fuller declaration of his sentiments. Sir Arthur had received, by post, a letter which had evidently affected him greatly, and had handed it to William Morland, who had read it with equal emotion; but neither of them had mentioned its contents, or alluded to it in any manner. After breakfast, the young men walked off together, and the girls separated to their different employments. I, who had arrived there to spend the day, was about to join them, when I was stopped by Mr. Leslie. "I want to speak to you," said he, "about that cousin of yours. My wife thinks he's going to marry Caroline; whereas it's plain to me, as doubtless it must be to you, that whatever attention he may be paying to that simple child—and, for my own part, I don't see that he *is* paying her any—is merely to cover William Morland's attachment to Bab. So that the end of Mrs. Leslie's wise schemes will be, to have one daughter the wife of a country curate——"

"A country curate, Mr. Leslie!" ejaculated Mrs. Leslie, holding up her hands in amazement and horror.

"And the other," pursued Mr. Leslie, "an old maid."

"An old maid!" reiterated Mrs. Leslie, in additional dismay—"An old maid!" Her very wig stood on end; and what farther she would have said was interrupted by the entrance of the accused party.

"I am come, Mr. Leslie," said Sir Arthur, —"do not move, Mrs. Leslie—pray stay, my dear cousin,—I am come to present to you a double petition. The letter which I received this morning was, like most human events, of mingled yarn—it brought intelligence of good and of evil. I have lost an old and excellent friend, the rector of Hadley-cum-Appleton, and have, by that loss, an excellent living to present to my friend William Morland. It is above fifteen hundred a-year, with a large house, a fine garden, and a park-like glebe, altogether a residence fit for any lady; and it comes at a moment in which such a piece of preferment is doubly welcome, since the first part of my petition relates to him. Hear it favourably, my dear sir—my dear madam: he loves your Barbara—and Barbara, I hope and believe, loves him."

"There, Mrs. Leslie!" interrupted Mr. Leslie, with an arch nod. "There! do you hear that?"

"You are both favourably disposed, I am sure," resumed Sir Arthur. "Such a son-in-law must be an honour to any man—must he not, my dear madam?—and I, for my part, have a brother's interest in his suit."

"There, Mr. Leslie!" ejaculated in her turn Mrs. Leslie, returning her husband's nod most triumphantly. "A brother's interest!—do you hear that?"

"Since," pursued Sir Arthur, "I have to crave your intercession with his dear and admirable sister, whom I have loved, without knowing it, ever since we were children in the nursery, and who now, although confessing that she does not hate me, talks of want of fortune—as if I had not enough, and of want of beauty and want of accomplishments—as if her matchless elegance and unrivalled conversation were not worth all the doll-like prettiness or tinsel acquirements under the sun. Pray intercede for me, dear cousin!—dear sir!" continued the ardent lover; whilst Mr. Leslie, without taking the slightest notice of the appeal, nodded most provokingly to the crest-fallen match-maker, and begged to know how she liked Sir Arthur's opinion of her system of education?

What answer the lady made, this deponent saith not—indeed, I believe she was too angry to speak—but the result was all that could be desired by the young people: the journey was again postponed; the double marriage celebrated at Hallenden; and Miss Caroline, as bridesmaid, accompanied the fair brides to "canny Northumberland," to take her chance for a husband amongst "fresh fields and pastures new."

MRS. TOMKINS, THE CHEESEMONGER.

Perhaps the finest character in all Molière is that of Madame Pernelle, the scolding grandmother in the "Tartufe;" at least, that scene (the opening scene of that glorious play,) in which, tottering in at a pace which her descendants have difficulty in keeping up with, she puts to flight her grandson, and her daughter-in-law's brother, (think of making men fly the field!) and puts to silence her daughter-in-law, her grand-daughter, and even the pert soubrette, (think of making women hold their tongues!) and finally boxes her own waiting-maid's ears for yawning and looking tired,—that scene of matchless scolding has always seemed to me unrivalled in the comic drama.* The English version of it in "The Hypocrite" is far less amusing, the old Lady Lambert being represented in that piece rather as a sour devotee, whose fiery zeal, and her submission to Cantwell, and even to Mawworm, form the chief cause, the mainspring—as it were, of her lectures; whilst Madame Pernelle, although doubtless the effect of her harangues is heightened and deepened by her perfect conviction that she is right and that all the rest are wrong, has yet a natural gift of shrewishness—is, so to say, a scold born, and would have rated her daughter-in-law and all her descendants, and bestowed her cuffs upon her domestics with equal good-will, though she had never aspired to the reputation of piety, or edified by the example of M. Tartufe. The gift was in her. Not only has Molière beaten, as was to be expected, his own English imitator, but he has achieved the far higher honour of vanquishing, in this single instance, his two great forerunners, Masters Shakspeare and Fletcher. For, although the royal dame of Anjou had a considerable talent for vituperation, and Petruchio's two wives, Catherine and Maria,† were scolds of promise; none of the three, in my mind, could be said

*I cannot resist the temptation of subjoining, at the end of this paper, some part of that inimitable scene; believing that, like other great writers of an older date, Molière has been somewhat "pushed from his stool" by later dramatists, and is more talked of than read. At all events, any one who does remember Madame Pernelle will not be sorry to meet with her again.—*Vide note, at the end of this paper.*

†Shakspeare's fine extravaganza, "The Taming of the Shrew," gave rise to an equally pleasant continuation by Fletcher, entitled "The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed;" a play little known, except to the professed lovers of the old drama, in which Petruchio, having lost his good wife Catherine, is betrayed into a second marriage to a gentle, quiet, demure damsel, called Maria, who, after their nuptials, changes into an absolute fury, turns the table upon him completely, and succeeds in establishing the female dominion upon the firmest possible basis, being aided throughout by a sort of chorus of married women from town and country.

to approach Madame Pernelle,—not to mention the superior mode of giving tongue (if I may affront the beautiful race of spaniels by applying in such a way a phrase appropriated to their fine instinct,)—to say nothing of the verbal superiority, Flipote's box on the ear remains unrivalled and unapproached. Catherine breaking the lute over her master's head is a joke in comparison.

Now, notwithstanding the great Frenchman's beating his English rivals so much in the representation of a shrew, I am by no means disposed to concede to our Continental neighbours any supremacy in the real living model. I should be as sorry that French women should go beyond us in that particular gift of the tongue, which is a woman's sole weapon, her one peculiar talent, as that their soldiers should beat ours in the more manly way of fighting with sword and with gun, or their painters or poets overpass us in their respective arts. The art of scolding is no trifling accomplishment, and I claim for my countrywomen a high degree of excellence in all the shades and varieties thereunto belonging, from the peevish grumble to the fiery retort—from "the quip modest" to "the countercheck quarrelsome." The gift is strictly national too; for although one particular district of London (which, indeed, has given its name to the dialect*) has been celebrated, and I believe deservedly celebrated, for its breed of scolds; yet I will undertake to pick up in any part of England, at four-and-twenty hours' notice, a shrew that shall vie with all Billingsgate.

To go no farther for an instance than our own market-town, I will match my worthy neighbour, Mrs. Tomkins, cheesemonger, in Queen-street, against any female fish-vender in Christendom. She, in her single person, simple as she stands there behind her counter, shall outscold the whole parish of Wapping.

Deborah Ford, such was Mrs. Tomkins's maiden appellation, was the only daughter of a thrifty and thriving yeoman in the county of Wilts, who having, to her own infinite dissatisfaction and the unspeakable discomfort of her family, remained a spinster for more years than she cared to tell, was at length got rid of by a manœuvring stepmother, who made his marrying Miss Deborah the condition of her supplying Mr. Simon Tomkins, cheesemonger, in Belford, with the whole produce of her dairy, celebrated for a certain mock Stilton, which his customers, who got it at about half the price of the real, were wont to extol as incomparably superior to the more genuine and more expensive commodity.

Simon hesitated—looked at Deborah's sour face; for she had by strong persuasion been induced to promise not to scold — that is to say, not to speak, (for, in her case, the terms were synonymous;) — muttered something which might be understood as a civil excuse, and went to the stable to get ready his horse and chaise. In that short walk, however, the prudent swain recollected that a rival cheesemonger had just set up over-against him in the same street of the identical town of Belford; that the aforesaid rival was also a bachelor, and, as Mrs. Ford had hinted, would doubtless not be so blind to his own interest as to neglect to take her mock Stilton, with so small an encumbrance as a sour-looking wife, who was said to be the best manager in the county: so that by the time the crafty stepmother reappeared with a parting glass of capital currant wine, (a sort of English stirrup-cup, which she positively affirmed to be of Deborah's making,) Simon had changed, or, as he expressed it, made up his mind to espouse Miss Deborah, for the benefit of his trade and the good of his customers.

Short as was the courtship, and great as were the pains taken by Mrs. Ford who performed impossibilities in the way of conciliation) to bring the marriage to bear, it had yet nearly gone off three several times, in consequence of Deborah's tongue, and poor Simon's misgivings, on whose mind, especially on one occasion, the night before the wedding, it was powerfully borne, that all the excellence of the currant wine, and all the advantages of the mock Stilton, were but poor compensations, not only for "peace and happy life," and "awful rule and just supremacy," but for the being permitted, in common parlance, to call his soul his own. Things, however, had gone too far. The stepmother talked of honour and character, and broken hearts; the father hinted at an action for damages, and a certain nephew, Timothy, an attorney-at-law; whilst a younger brother, six feet two in height, and broad in proportion, more than hinted at a good cudgelling. So Simon was married.

Long before the expiration of the honeymoon, he found all his worst fears more than confirmed. His wife—"his mistress," as in the homely country phrase he too truly called her—was the greatest tyrant that ever ruled over a household. Compared with our tigress, Judith Jenkins, now Mrs. Jones, was a lamb. Poor Simon's shopman left him, his maid gave warning, and his apprentices ran away; so that he who could not give warning, and was ashamed to run away, remained the one solitary subject of this despotic queen, the

* Even the Americans—although, in a land so celebrated for freedom of speech, and so jealous of being outdone in any way by the mother country, one would think that they might by this time have acquired an established scolding-place of their own—still use the word "Billingsgate" to express the species of vituperation of which I am treating. I found the phrase in that sense in a very eloquent speech of their very eloquent advocate, Mr. Mason, as reported in a New York paper, no longer ago than last June: a diffusion of fame which our fish-wives owe to the wide spread of our language. Who in the New World ever heard of their Parisian rivals, *les Dames de la Halle!*

luckless man-of-all-work of that old and well-accustomed shop. Bribery, under the form of high wages and unusual indulgences, did to a certain point remedy this particular evil; so that they came at last only to change servants about once a fortnight on an average, and to lose their apprentices, some by running away and some by buying themselves off, not oftener than twice a year. Indeed, in one remarkable instance, they had the good fortune to keep a cook, who happened to be stone deaf, upwards of a twelvemonth; and, in another still more happy case, were provided with a permanent shopman, in the shape of an old pliant rheumatic Frenchman, who had lived in some Italian warehouse in London until fairly worn off his legs, in which plight his importers had discarded him, to find his way back to *la belle France* as best he could. Happening to fall in with him, on going to the London warehouse with an order for Parmesan, receiving an excellent character of him from his employers, and being at his wit's end for a man, Mr. Simon Tomkins, after giving him due notice of his wife's failing, engaged the poor old foreigner, and carried him home to Queen-street in triumph. A much-enduring man was M. Leblanc! Next after his master, he, beyond all doubt, was the favourite object of Deborah's objurgation; but, by the aid of snuff and philosophy, he bore it bravely. "*Mais je suis philosophe!*" cried the poor old Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders, and tapping his box when the larum of his mistress's tongue ran through the house—"*Toutefois je suis philosophe!*" exclaimed he with a patient sigh; and Deborah, who, without comprehending the phrase, understood it to convey some insinuation against herself, redoubled her clamour at the sound.

Tobacco in its various forms seems to have been the chief consolation of her victims. If snuff and philosophy were Leblanc's resources, a pipe and a tankard were his master's; and in both cases the objects to which they resorted for comfort drew down fresh lectures from their liege lady. She complained of the smell. And of a surety the smell *is* an abomination; only that, her father and her seven brothers, to say nothing of half-a-dozen uncles and some score of cousins, having been as atrociously given to smoking as if they had been born and bred in Germany, so that eight or ten chimneys had been constantly going in one room in the old farm-house of Bevis-land, the fumes of tobacco might be said to be her native air; and Mr. Tomkins's stock-in-trade consisting, besides the celebrated cheese which had so unluckily brought him acquainted with her, of soap, candles, salt-butter, bacon, pickles, oils, and other unsavoury commodities, one would really think that no one particular stench could greatly increase the ill odours of that most unfragrant shop. She, however, imputed all the steams that invaded her nostrils either to her shopman's snuff or her husband's smoking, and threatened ten times a day to demolish the pipes and the boxes, which were good for nothing, as she observed, but to keep "the men-folk idle and to poison every Christian thing about them;" an affront which both parties endured with a patient silence, which only served to exasperate her wrath.*

Find it where he would, much need had poor Mr. Tomkins of comfort. Before his marriage, he had been a spruce dapper little man, with blue eyes, a florid complexion, and hair of the colour commonly called sandy,—alert in movement, fluent in speech, and much addicted to laughing, whether at his own jokes or the jokes of his neighbours; he belonged to the Bachelors' Club and the Odd Fellows, was a great man at the cricket-ground, and a person of some consideration at the vestry; in short was the *beau idéal* of the young thriving country tradesman of thirty years ago.

He had not been married half a year before such an alteration took place as really would have seemed incredible. His dearest friends did not know him. The whole man was changed—shrunk, shrivelled, withered, dwindled into nothing. The henpecked husband in the farce, carrying his wife's clogs in one hand and her bandbox in the other, and living on the "tough drumsticks of turkeys, and the fat flaps of shoulders of mutton," was but a type of him. The spirit of his youth was departed. He gave up attending the coffee-house or the cricket-ground, ceased to joke or to laugh at jokes; and he who had had at club and vestry "a voice potential as double as the *mayor*'s," could hardly be brought to answer Yes or No to a customer. The man was evidently in an atrophy. His wife laid the blame to his smoking, and his friends laid it to his wife, whilst poor Simon smoked on and said nothing. It was a parallel case to Peter Jen-

* Nothing is so provoking in an adversary as silence. During the great dispute in France about the Ancients and Moderns, in Madame Dacier's time, one of the combatants published a pamphlet with the title, *Reponse au Silence de M. de la Motte.* I confess that I have some sympathy with the writer. It was but the other day that I and another lady were engaged in an argument with one of the stronger sex, and had just beaten him out of the field—were on the very point of giving him the *coup de grace*, when all on a sudden my gentleman made us a low bow, and declared that we should have it in our own way—that he would not say another word on the subject. I don't know that I was ever so much provoked in my life. To be defrauded of our just victory (for of course we were right,) whilst the cunning wretch (a clever man, too, which made it worse) looked as complacent and as smiling as if he had yielded the point from pure compassion to our weakness! Mrs. Tomkins would have boxed his ears. It is just as if an opponent at chess, whose pawns are almost gone, and whose pieces are taken, whose game, in short, is desperate—and who must in a move or two be checkmated—should suddenly proclaim himself tired, and sweep away the board. I wonder what Mrs. Tomkins would say to that!

kins's, and Stephen Lane might have saved him; but Stephen not being amongst his cronies, (for Simon was a Tory,) and Simon making no complaint, that chance was lost. He lingered through the first twelve months after their marriage, and early in the second he died, leaving his widow in excellent circumstances, the possessor of a flourishing business and the mother of a little boy, to whom she (the will having of course been made under her supervision) was constituted sole guardian.

Incredible as it may seem, considering the life she had led him while alive, Deborah was really sorry for poor Simon — perhaps from a touch of remorse, perhaps because she lost in him the most constant and patient listener to her various orations—perhaps from a mixture of both feelings; at all events, sorry she was; and as grief in her showed itself in the very novel form of gentleness, so that for four and twenty hours she scolded nobody, the people about her began to be seriously alarmed for her condition, and were about to call in the physician who had attended the defunct, to prescribe for the astounding placability of the widow, when something done or left undone, by the undertaker or his man, produced the effect which medical writers are pleased to call "an effort of nature;" she began to scold, and scolding all through the preparations for the funeral, and the funeral itself, and the succeeding ceremonies of will-reading, legacy-paying, bill-settling, stock-valuing, and so forth, with an energy and good-will, and an unwearying perseverance that left nothing to be feared on the score of her physical strength. John Wesley preaching four sermons, and Kean playing Richard three times in one day, might have envied her power of lungs. She could have spoken Lord Brougham's famous six hours' speech on the Law Reform without exhaustion or hoarseness. But what do I talk of a six hours' speech? She could have spoken a whole night's debate in her own single person, without let or pause, or once dropping her voice, till the division, so prodigious was her sostenuto. Matthews and Miss Kelly were nothing to her. And the exercise agreed with her—she throve on it.

So for full twenty years after the death of Mr. Tomkins did she reign and scold in the dark, dingy, low-browed, well-accustomed shop of which she was now the sole directress. M. Pierre Leblanc continued to be her man of business; and as, besides his boasted philosophy, he added a little French pliancy and flattery of which he did not boast, and a great deal of dexterity in business and integrity, as well as clearness in his accounts, they got on together quite as well as could be expected. The trade flourished; for, to do Deborah justice, she was not only a good manager, in the lowest sense of the term—which, commonly speaking, means only frugal,—but she was, in the most liberal acceptation of the words, prudent, sagacious, and honest in her pecuniary dealings, buying the very best commodities, and selling them at such a fair and moderate profit as ensured a continuation of the best custom of the county—the more especially as her sharp forbidding countenance and lank raw-boned figure were seldom seen in the shop. People said (but what will not people say?) that one reason for her keeping away from such excellent scolding-ground was to be found in *les doux yeux* of M. Pierre Leblanc, who, withered, wizened, broken-down cripple as he was, was actually suspected of having made an offer to his mistress;—a story which I wholly disbelieve, not only because I do not think that the poor philosopher, whose courage was rather of a passive than an active nature, would ever have summoned resolution to make such a proposal; but because he never, as far as I can discover, was observed in the neighbourhood with a scratched face—a catastrophe which would as certainly have followed the audacity in question, as the night follows the day. Moreover, it is bad philosophy to go hunting about for a remote and improbable cause, when a sufficient and likely one is close at hand; and there was, in immediate juxtaposition with Mrs. Tomkins's shop, reason enough to keep her out of it to the end of time.

I have said that this shop, although spacious and not incommodious, was dark and low-browed, forming a part of an old-fashioned irregular tenement, in an old-fashioned irregular street. The next house, with a sort of very deep and square bay-window, which was, by jutting out so as to overshadow it, in some sort the occasion of the gloom which, increased, perhaps, by the dingy nature of the commodities, did unquestionably exist in this great depository of cheese and chandlery-ware, happened to be occupied by a dealer in whalebone in its various uses, stays, umbrellas, parasols, and so forth,—a fair, mild, gentle Quakeress — a female Friend, with two or three fair smiling daughters, the very models of all that was quiet and peaceful, who, without even speaking to the furious virago, were a standing rebuke to that "perturbed spirit." The deep bay-window was their constant dwelling-place. There they sat tranquilly working from morning to night, gliding in and out with a soft stealing pace like a cat, sleek, dimpled, and dove-eyed, with that indescribable nicety and purity of dress and person, and that blameless modesty of demeanour, for which the female Friend is so generally distinguished. Not a fault could Mrs. Tomkins discover in her next neighbour,—but if ever woman hated her next neighbour, she hated Rachel May.

The constant sight of this object of her detestation was, of course, one of the evils of Mrs. Tomkins's prosperous life;—but she had

many others to fight with—most of them, of course, of her own seeking. What she would have done without a grievance, it is difficult to guess; but she had so great a genius for making one out of every thing and every person connected with her, that she was never at a loss in that particular. Her stepmother she had always regarded as a natural enemy; and at her father's death, little as she, generally speaking, coveted money, she contrived to quarrel with her whole family on the division of his property, chiefly on the score of an old japanned chest of drawers, not worth ten shillings, which her brothers and sisters were too much of her own temper to relinquish.

Then her son, on whom she doted with a peevish, grumbling, fretful, discontented fondness that always took the turn of finding fault, was, as she used reproachfully to tell him, just like his father. The poor child, do what he would, could never please her. If he were well, she scolded; if he were sick, she scolded; if he were silent, she scolded; if he talked, she scolded. She scolded if he laughed, and she scolded if he cried.

Then the people about her were grievances, of course, from Mr. Pierre Leblanc downward. She turned off her porter for apprehending a swindler, and gave away her yard-dog for barking away some thieves. There was no foreseeing what would displease her. She caused a beggar to be taken up for insulting her, because he, with his customary cant, blessed her good-humoured face; and she complained to the mayor of the fine fellow Punch for the converse reason, because he stopped before her windows and mimicked her at her own door.

Then she met with a few calamities of which her temper was more remotely the cause;—such as being dismissed from the dissenting congregation that she frequented, for making an over-free use of the privilege which pious ladies sometimes assume of quarrelling with their acquaintance on spiritual grounds, and venting all manner of angry anathema for the love of God; an affront that drove her to church the very next Sunday. Also, she got turned off by her political party, in the heat of a contested election, for insulting friends and foes in the bitterness of her zeal, and thereby endangering the return of her favourite candidate. A provincial poet, whose works she had abused, wrote a song in her dispraise; and three attorneys brought actions against her for defamation.

These calamities notwithstanding, Deborah's life might, for one and twenty years, be accounted tolerably prosperous. At the end of that time, two misfortunes befell her nearly at once,—Pierre Leblanc died, and her son attained his majority.

"Mother!" said the young man, as they were dining together off a couple of ducks two days after the old shopman's funeral; "Mother!" said John Tomkins, mustering up his courage, "I think I was one and twenty last Saturday."

"And what of that?" replied Deborah, putting on her stormiest face; "I'm mistress here, and mistress I'll continue: your father, poor simpleton that he was, was not fool enough to leave his house and business to an ignorant boy. The stock and trade are mine, sir, and shall be mine, in spite of all the undutiful sons in Christendom. One and twenty, forsooth! What put that in your head, I wonder? What do you mean by talking of one and twenty, sirrah?"

"Only, mother," replied John, meekly, "that, though father left you the house and business, he left me three thousand pounds, which, by your prudent management, are now seven thousand; and uncle William Ford, he left me the new Warren Farm; and so, mother, I was thinking, with your good will, to marry and settle."

"Marry!" exclaimed Mrs. Tomkins, too angry even to scold—"marry!" and she laid down her knife and fork, as if choking.

"Yes, mother!" rejoined John, taking courage from his mother's unexpected quietness, "Rachel May's pretty grand-daughter Rebecca; she is but half a Quaker, you know, for her mother was a Churchwoman: and so, with your good leave—" and smack went all that remained of the ducks in poor John's face; an effort of nature that probably saved Deborah's life, and enabled her to give vent to an oration to which I have no power to do justice; but of which the non-effect was so decided, that John and his pretty Quakeress were married within a fortnight, and are now happily settled at the new Warren House; whilst Mrs. Tomkins, having hired a good-humoured, good-looking, strapping Irishman of three and twenty, as her new foreman, is said to have it in contemplation, by way, as she says, of punishing her son, to make him, the aforesaid Irish foreman, successor to Simon Tomkins, as well as to Pierre Leblanc, and is actually reported, (though the fact seems incredible,) to have become so amiable under the influence of the tender passion, as to have passed three days without scolding any body in the house or out. The little God of Love is, to be sure, a powerful deity, especially when he comes somewhat out of season; but this transition of character does seem to me too violent a change even for a romance, much more for this true history; and I hold it no lack of charity to continue doubtful of Deborah's reformation till after the honey-moon.

Note.

MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, MARIANNE, CLEANTE, DAMIS, DORINE, FLIPOTE.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Allons, Flipote, allons; que d'eux je me délivre.

ELMIRE.

Vouz marchez d'un tel pas qu'on a peine à vous suivre.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Laissez, ma bru, laissez; ne venez pas plus loin:
Ce sont toutes façons dont je n'ai pas besoin.

ELMIRE.

De ce que l'on vous doit envers vous l'on s'acquitte.
Mais, ma mère, d'où vient que vous sortez si vite?

MADAME PERNELLE.

C'est que je ne puis voir tout ce ménage-ci,
Et que de me complaire on ne prend nul souci.
Oui, je sors de chez vous fort mal édifiée;
Dans toutes mes leçons j'y suis contrariée;
On n'y respecte rien, chacun y parle haut,
Et c'est tout justement la cour du roi Pétaud.

DORINE.

Si . . .

MADAME PERNELLE.

Vous êtes, ma mie, une fille suivante
Un peu trop forte en gueule, et fort impertinente;
Vous, vous mêlez sur tout de dire votre avis.

DAMIS.

Mais . . .

MADAME PERNELLE.

Vous êtes un sot, en trois lettres, mon fils;
C'est moi! qui vous le dis, qui suis votre grand'mère;
Et j'ai prédit cent fois à mon fils, votre père,
Que vous preniez tout l'air d'un méchant garnement,
Et ne lui donneriez jamais que du tourment.

MARIANNE.

Je crois . . .

MADAME PERNELLE.

Mon Dieu! sa sœur, vous faites la discrète;
Et vous n'y touchez pas, tant vous semblez doucette!
Mais il n'est, comme on dit, pire eau que l'eau qui dort;
Et vous menez, sous cape, un train que je hais fort.

ELMIRE.

Mais, ma mère . . .

MADAME PERNELLE.

Ma bru, qu'il ne vous en déplaise,
Votre conduite en tout est tout-à-fait mauvaise;
Vous devriez leur mettre un bon exemple aux yeux;
Et leur défunte mère en usait beaucoup mieux.
Vous êtes dépensière; et cet état meblesse,
Que vous alliez vêtue ainsi qu'une princesse,
Quiconque à son mari veut plaire seulement,
Ma bru, n'a pas besoin de tant d'ajustement.

CLEANTE.

Mais, madame, après tout . . .

MADAME PERNELLE.

Pour vous, monsieur son frère,
Je vous estime fort, vous aime, et vous révère;
Mais enfin, si j'étais de mon fils, son époux,
Je vous prierais bien fort de n'entrer point chez nous.
Sans cesse vous prêchez des maximes de vivre
Qui par d'honnêtes gens ne se doivent point suivre.
Je vous parle un peu franc; mais c'est là mon humeur,
Et je ne mâche point ce que j'ai sur le cœur.

DAMIS.

Votre monsieur Tartufe est bien heureux, sans doute.

MADAME PERNELLE.

C'est un homme de bien, qu'il faut que l'on écoute;
Et je ne puis souffrir, sans me mettre en courroux,
De le voir quereller par un fou comme vous.

DAMIS.

Quoi! je souffrirai, moi, qu'un cagot de critique
Vienne usurper céans un pouvoir tyrannique;
Et que nous ne puissions à rien nous divertir,
Si ce beau monsieur-là n'y daigne consentir?

DORINE.

S'il le faut écouter et croire à ses maximes,
On ne peut faire rien qu'on ne fasse des crimes:
Car il contrôle tout, ce critique zélé.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Et tout ce qu'il contrôle est fort bien contrôlé.

* * * * *

MADAME PERNELLE, *a Elmire.*

Voilà les contes bleus qu'il vous faut pour vous plaire,
Ma bru. L'on est chez vous contrainte de se taire:
Car madame, à jaser, tient le dé tout le jour.
Mais enfin je prétends discourir à mon tour:
Je vous dis que mon fils n'a rien fait de plus sage
Qu'en recueillant chez soi ce dévot personnage;
Que le ciel, au besoin, l'a céans envoyé
Pour redresser à tous votre esprit fourvoyé;
Que, pour votre salut, vous le devez entendre;
Et qu'il ne reprend rien qui ne soit à reprendre.
Ces visites, ces bals, ces conversations,
Sont du malin esprit toutes inventions.
Là, jamais on n'entend de pieuses paroles;
Ce sont propos oisifs, chansons et fariboles:
Bien souvent le prochain en a sa bonne part,
Et l'on y sait médire et du tiers et du quart.
Enfin les gens sensés ont leurs têtes troublées
De la confusion de telles assemblées:
Mille caquets divers s'y font en moins de rien;
Et, comme l'autre jour un docteur dit fort bien,
C'est véritablement la tour de Babylone,
Car chacun y babille, et tout du long de l'aune:
Et, pour conter l'histoire où ce point l'engagea . . .
(*montrant Cleante.*)
Voilà-t-il pas monsieur qui ricane déjà.
Allez chercher vos fous qui vous donnent à rire,
(*a Elmire.*)
Et sans . . . Adieu, ma bru; je ne veux plus rien dire.
Sachez que pour céans j'en rabats de moitié,
Et qu'il fera beau temps quand j'y mettrai le pié.
(*donnant un soufflet a Flipote.*)
Allons, vous, vous rêvez, et bayez aux corneilles.
Jour de Dieu! je saurai vous frotter les oreilles.
Marchons, gaupe, marchons.

TARTUFE—ACTE I., SCENE I.

THE YOUNG MARKET-WOMAN.

BELFORD is so populous a place, and the country round so thickly inhabited, that the Saturday's market is almost as well attended as an ordinary fair. So early as three or four o'clock in the morning, the heavy wagons (one with a capital set of bells) begin to pass our house, and increase in number—to say nothing of the admixture of other vehicles, from the humble donkey-cart to the smart gig, and hosts of horsemen and foot-people—until nine or ten, when there is some pause in the affluence of market folk till about one, when the lightened wains, laden, not with corn, but with rosy-cheeked country lasses, begin to show signs of travelling homeward, and continue passing at no very distant intervals until twilight. There is more traffic on our road in one single Saturday than on all the other days of the week put together. And if we feel the stirring movement of "market-day"

so strongly in the country,* it may be imagined how much it must enliven the town.

Saturday at noon is indeed the very time to see Belford, which in general has the fault, not uncommon in provincial towns, of wanting bustle. The old market-place, always picturesque from its shape (an unequal triangle), its size, the diversified outline and irregular architecture of the houses, and the beautiful Gothic church by which it is terminated, is then all alive with the busy hum of traffic, the agricultural wealth and the agricultural population of the district. From the poor farmer with his load of corn, up to the rich mealman and the great proprietor, all the "landed interest" is there, mixed with jobbers and chapmen of every description, cattle-dealers, millers, brewers, maltsters, justices going to the Bench, constables and overseers following to be sworn, carriers, carters, errand-boys, tradesmen, shopmen, apprentices, gentlemen's servants, and gentlemen in their own persons, mixed with all the riff-raff of the town, and all the sturdy beggars of the country, and all the noisy urchins of both.

Noise indeed is the prime characteristic of the Belford market-day—noise of every sort, from the heavy rumbling of so many loaded wagons over the paved market-place, to the crash of the crockery-ware in the narrow passage of Princes' Street, as the stall is knocked down by the impetus of a cart full of turnips, or the squall of the passengers of the Southern caravan, upset by the irresistible momentum of the Hadley-mill team.

But the noisiest, and perhaps the prettiest places, were the Piazza at the end of Saint Nicholas's church, appropriated by long usage to the female venders of fruit and vegetables, where certain old women, as well known to the *habitués* of the market as the church-tower, were wont to *flyte* at each other, and at their customers, with the genius for vituperation for which ladies of their profession have long been celebrated; and a detached spot called the Butter-market, at the back of the Market-place proper, where the more respectable basket-women, the daughters and wives of farmers, and the better order of the female peasantry, used to bring eggs, butter, and poultry for sale on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

A pretty and a diversified place was the Butter-market; for besides the commodities, dead and alive, brought by the honest countrywomen, a few stalls were set out with straw hats, and caps and ribbons, and other feminine gear, to tempt them in return; and here and there an urchin of the more careful sort would bring *his* basket of tame rabbits, or wood-pigeons, or young ferrets, or squeaking guinea-pigs, or a nest of downy owls or gaping jackdaws, or cages of linnets and thrushes, to tempt the townsfolk. Nay, in the season, some thoughtful little maid of eight or ten would bring nosegays of early primroses or sweet violets, or wall-flowers, or stocks, to add a few pence to the family store.

A pleasant sight was the Butter-market, with its comely country wives, its modest lasses and neat children,—pleasant and cheerful, in spite of the din of so many women, buyers and sellers, all talking together, and the noise of turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, and guinea-pigs;—but the pleasantest sight there was a young damsel famous for eggs and poultry, and modest beauty, known by the name of "pretty Bessy,"—but not a regular attendant of the market, her goods being in such request that she seldom had occasion to come so far, the families round, ourselves among the rest, dealing constantly with her.

We are persons of great regularity in our small affairs of every class, from the petty dealings of housekeeping to the larger commerce of acquaintanceship. The friends who have once planted us by their fireside, and made us feel as if at home there, can no more get rid of our occasional presence, than they could root out that other tenacious vegetable, the Jerusalem artichoke; even if they were to pull us up by the stalk and toss us over the wall (an experiment by the way, which, to do them justice, they have never tried,) I do verily believe, that in the course of a few months we should spring up again in the very same place: and our tradespeople, trifling as is the advantage to be derived from our custom, may yet reckon upon it with equal certainty. They are, as it happens, civil, honest, and respectable, the first people in their line in the good town of Belford; but, were they otherwise, the circumstance would hardly affect our invincible constancy. The world is divided between the two great empires of habit and novelty; the young following pretty generally in the train of the new-fangled sovereign, whilst we of an elder generation adhere with similar fidelity to the *ancien régime*. I, especially, am the very bond-slave of habit—love old friends, old faces, old books, old scenery, old flowers, old associations of every sort and kind—nay, although a woman, and one not averse to that degree of decoration which belongs to the suitable and the becoming, I even love old fashions and old clothes; and can so little comprehend why we should tire of a thing because we have had it long, that, a favourite pelisse having become shabby, I this very day procured with some difficulty silk of the exact colour and shade, and, having ordered it to be made in direct conformity with the old pattern, shall have the

* My dog Dash, who regularly attends his master to the Bench, where he is the only dog admitted, and a great pet, knows Saturday as well as I do; follows my father as closely as his shadow from the moment that he comes down stairs; and would probably break through the door or jump through a closed window, rather than suffer the phaeton to set off without him.

satisfaction next Sunday of donning a new dress, which my neighbours, the shoemaker's wife and the baker's daughters, who have in their heads an absolute inventory of my apparel, will infallibly mistake for the old one.

After this striking instance, the courteous reader will have no difficulty in comprehending that the same "auld-lang-syne" feeling, which leads me to think no violets so fragrant as those which grow on a certain sunny bank in Kibes Lane, and no cherries so sweet as those from the great mayduke, on the south wall of our old garden, should also induce me to prefer before all oranges those which come from Mrs. Hollis's shop, at the corner of the churchyard—a shop which we have frequented ever since I knew what an orange was; and, for the same reason, to rank before all the biscuits which ever were invented, a certain most seducing, thin, and crisp composition, as light as foam and as tasteless as spring-water, the handiwork of Mrs. Purdy, of the Market-place in the good town of Belford; as well as to place above all other poultry that which cackles in the baskets of "pretty Bessy." The oranges and biscuits are good in themselves, and so are the ducks and chickens; but some of their superiority is undoubtedly to be ascribed to the partiality generated by habit.

Another of the persons with whom we had in our small way dealt longest, and whom we liked best, was old Matthew, the matseller. As surely as February came, would Matthew present his bent person and withered though still ruddy face at our door, with the three rush mats which he knew that our cottage required; and as surely did he receive fifteen shillings, lawful money of Great Britain, in return for his commodity, notwithstanding an occasional remonstrance from some flippant housemaid or domineering cook, who would endeavour to send him off with an assurance that his price was double that usually given, and that no mat ever made with rushes was or could be worth five shillings. "His honour always deals with me," was Matthew's mild response, and an appeal to the parlour never failed to settle matters to his entire satisfaction. In point of fact, Matthew's mats were honestly worth the money; and we enjoyed in this case the triple satisfaction of making a fair bargain, dealing with an old acquaintance, and relieving, in the best way—that of employment—the wants of age and of poverty; for, although Matthew's apparel was accurately clean and tidy, and his thin, wrinkled cheek as hale and ruddy as a summer apple, yet the countless patches on his various garments, and the spare, trembling figure, bent almost double and crippled with rheumatism, told a too legible story of infirmity and penury. Except on his annual visit with his merchandise, we never saw the good old matmaker; nor did I even know where he resided, until the want of an additional mat for my greenhouse, towards the end of last April, induced me to make inquiry concerning his habitation.

I had no difficulty in obtaining a direction to his dwelling; and found that, for a poor old matmaker, Matthew was a person of more consideration and note in our little world than I could have expected, being, in a word, one of the honestest, soberest, and most industrious men in the neighbourhood.

He lived, I found, in Barkham Dingle, a deep woodland dell, communicating with a large tract of unenclosed moors and commons in the next parish, convenient doubtless to Matthew, as affording the rushes of which his mats were constructed, as well as heath for brooms, of which he was said to have lately established a manufacture, and which were almost equally celebrated for durability and excellence with the articles that he had made for so many years. In Barkham Dingle lived old Matthew, with a grand-daughter, who was, I found, also renowned for industry and good-humour; and, one fine afternoon towards the end of April, I set forth in my little pony-phaeton, driven by that model of all youthful serving-men, our boy John, to make my purchase.

Our road lay through a labyrinth of cross-country lanes, intermingled with tiny patches of village greens, where every here and there a score or two of sheep, the small flock of some petty farmer, were nestled with their young lambs among the golden gorse and the feathery broom, and which started up, bleating, at the sound of our wheels and the sight of Dash (far too well-bred a dog to dream of molesting them), as if our peaceful procession had really been something to be frightened at. Rooks were wheeling above our heads, wood-pigeons flying across the fields; the shrill cry of the plover mixed with the sweet song of the nightingale and the monotonous call of the cuckoo; whilst every hedge echoed with the thousand notes of the blackbird, the linnet, the thrush, and "all the finches of the grove." Geese and ducks, with their train of callow younglings, were dabbling in every pool; little bands of straggling children were wandering through the lanes; everything, in short, gave token of the loveliest of the seasons, the fresh and joyous spring. Vegetation was, however, unusually backward. The blossom of the sloe, called by the country people "the blackthorn winter," still lingered in the hedges, mingling its snowy garlands with the deep, rich brown of the budding oak and the tender green of the elm; the primroses of March still mingled with the cowslips, pansies, orchises, and wild hyacinths of April; and the flower of the turnip was only just beginning to diffuse its honeyed odours (equal in fragrance to the balmy tassels of the lime) in the most sheltered nooks or the sunniest exposures. The "blessed sun" himself

seemed rather bright than warm: the season was, in short, full three weeks backwarder than it should have been according to the almanac. Still it was spring, beautiful spring! and, as we drew near to the old beech-wood called Barkham Dingle, we felt in its perfection all the charm of the scene and the hour.

Although the country immediately round was unenclosed, as had been fully proved by the last half mile of undulating common, interspersed by old shaggy trees and patches, (islets, as it were) of tangled underwood, as well as by a few rough ponies and small cows belonging to the country people; yet the lanes leading to it had been intersected by frequent gates, from the last of which a pretty, little, rosy, smiling girl, to whom I had tossed a penny for opening it, had sprung across the common, like a fawn, to be ready with her services at that leading into the Dingle, down which a rude cart-track, seldom used unless for the conveyance of fagots or brushwood, led by a picturesque but by no means easy descent.

Leaving chaise, and steed, and driver, to wait our return at the gate, Dash and I pursued our way by a winding yet still precipitous path to the bottom of the dell. Nothing could be more beautiful than the scene. On every side, steep, shelving banks, clothed with magnificent oaks and beeches, the growth of centuries, descended gradually, like some vast amphitheatre, to a clear, deep piece of water, lying like a mirror in the midst of the dark woods, and letting light and sunshine into the picture. The leaves of the beech were just bursting into a tender green from their shining sheaths, and the oaks bore still the rich brown, which of their unnumbered tints is perhaps the loveliest; but every here and there a scattered horse-chestnut, or plane, or sycamore, had assumed its summer verdure: the weeping birch, "the lady of the woods," was breaking from the bud, the holly glittering in its unvarying glossiness, the hawthorn and the briar-rose in full leaf, and the ivy and woodbine twisting their bright wreaths over the rugged trunks of the gigantic forest-trees; so that green formed even now the prevailing colour of the wood. The ground, indeed, was enamelled with flowers like a parterre. Primroses, cowslips, pansies, orchises, ground-ivy, and wild hyacinths, were blended in gorgeous profusion with the bright wood-vetch, the light wood-anemone, and the delicate wood-sorrel,* which sprang from the mossy roots of the beeches, unrivalled in grace and beauty, more elegant even than the lily of the valley that grew by its side. Nothing could exceed the delightfulness of that winding wood-walk.

I soon came in sight of the place of my destination, a low-browed, thatched cottage, perched like a wild-duck's nest at the very edge of the pool, and surrounded by a little garden redeemed from the forest—a small *clearing*, where cultivated flowers, and beds of berry-bushes, and pear and cherry trees, in full blossom, contrasted strangely yet pleasantly with the wild scenery around.

The cottage was very small, yet it had the air of snugness and comfort which one loves to associate with the dwellings of the industrious peasantry. A goodly fagot-pile, a donkey-shed, and a pig-sty evidently inhabited, confirmed this impression; and geese and ducks swimming in the water, and chickens straying about the door, added to the cheerfulness of the picture.

As I approached, I recognised an old acquaintance in a young girl, who, with a straw basket in her hand, was engaged in feeding the cocks and hens—no less a person than pretty Bessy the young market-woman, of whom I have before spoken, celebrated for rearing the earliest ducks and the fattest and whitest chickens ever seen in these parts. Any Wednesday or Saturday morning, during the spring or summer, might Bessy be seen on the road to Belford, tripping along by the side of her little cart, hardly larger than a wheelbarrow, drawn by a sedate and venerable donkey, and laden with coops full of cackling or babbling inmates, together with baskets of fresh eggs—for Bessy's commodities were as much prized at the breakfast as at the dinner table. She meant, as I have said, to keep the market; but, somehow or other, she seldom reached it; the quality of her merchandise being held in such estimation by the families around, that her coops and baskets were generally emptied before they gained their place of destination.

Perhaps the popularity of the vender had something to do with the rapid sale of her poultry-ware. Never did any one more completely realize the *beau idéal* of a young, happy, innocent, country girl, than Matthew's grand-daughter. Fresh and fair, her rosy cheeks mantling with blushes, and her cherry lips breaking into smiles, she was the very milk-maid of Isaac Walton; and there was an old-fashioned neatness and simplicity, a complete absence of all finery, in her attire, together with a modest sweetness in her round young voice, a rustic grace in her little curtsy, and, above all, a total unconsciousness of her charms, which not only heightened the effect, but deepened and strengthened the impression. No one that ever had seen them could forget Bessy's innocent smiles.

At present, however, the poor girl was evidently in no smiling mood; and, as I was thridding with care and labour the labyrinths of an oak newly felled and partly barked, which lay across the path, to the great improvement of its picturesqueness (there are

* There is a pink variety of this beautiful wild flower; but the pencilled white is the most elegant.

few objects that so much enhance the beauty of woodland scenery) and the equal augmentation of its difficulty, I could not help observing how agitated and preoccupied the little damsel seemed. Her cheek had lost its colour, her step was faltering, and the trembling hand with which she was distributing the corn from her basket could hardly perform its task. Her head was turned anxiously towards the door, as if something important were going forward within the house; and it was not until I was actually by her side, and called her by name, that she perceived me.

The afternoon, although bright and pleasant for the season, was one of those in which the sun sometimes amuses himself by playing at bopeep. The sky had become overcast shortly after I entered the Dingle, and, by the time I had surmounted the last tall jetting bare bough of the oak, some of the branches of which I was fain to scramble over and some to creep through, and had fairly reached the cottage door, a sudden shower was whistling through the trees with such violence as to render both Dash and myself very glad to accept Bessy's embarrassed invitation and get under shelter from the pelting of the storm.

My entrance occasioned an immediate and somewhat awkward pause in a discussion that had been carried on, apparently with considerable warmth, between my good old host, Matthew, who, with a half-finished mat in his hand, was sitting in a low wicker chair on one side of the hearth, and a visiter, also of my acquaintance, who was standing against the window; and, with the natural feelings of repugnance to such an intrusion, I had hardly taken the seat offered me by Bessy and given my commission to her grandfather, before I proposed to go away, saying that I saw they were busy, that the rain was nothing, that I had a carriage waiting, that I particularly wished to get home, and so forth—all the civil falsehoods, in short, with which, finding oneself *madame de trop*, one attempts to escape from an uncomfortable situation.

My excuses were, however, altogether useless. Bessy would not hear of my departure; Farmer White, my fellow-visiter, assured me that the rain was coming down harder than ever; and the old matmaker declared that, so far from my being in the way, all the world was welcome to hear what he had to say, and he had just been wishing for some discreet body to judge of the farmer's behaviour. And, the farmer professing himself willing that I should be made acquainted with the matter, and perfectly ready to abide by my opinion—provided it coincided with his own—I resumed my seat opposite to Matthew, whilst poor Bessy, blushing and ashamed, placed herself on a low stool in the corner of the little room, and began making friends with Dash.

"The long and the short of the matter is, ma'am," quoth old Matthew, "that Jem White—I dare say you know Jem; he's a good lad and a 'dustrious—and my Bessy there—and she's a good girl and a 'dustrious too, thof I say it that should not say it—have been keeping company, like, for these two years past; and now, just as I thought they were going to marry and settle in the world, down comes his father, the farmer there, and wants him to marry another wench and be false-hearted to my girl."

"I never knew that he courted her, ma'am, till last night," interrupted the farmer.

"And who does he want Jem to marry?" pursued the old man, warming as he went on. "Who but Farmer Brookes's fine daughter 'Gusta—Miss 'Gusta as they call her—who's just come back from Belford boarding-school, and goes about the country in her silks and her satins, with her veils and her fine worked bags,—who but she! as if she was a lady born like madam there! Now my Bessy——"

"I have not a word to say against Bessy," again interrupted the farmer; "she's a good girl, and a pretty girl, and an industrious girl. I have not a word to say against Bessy. But the fact is, that I have had an offer of the Holm Farm for Jem, and therefore——"

"And a fine farmer's wife 'Gusta Brookes will make!" quoth the matmaker, interrupting Master White in his turn. "A pretty farmer's wife! She that can do nothing on earth but jabber French, and read story-books, and thump on the music! Now, there's my girl can milk, and churn, and bake, and brew, and cook, and wash, and make, and mend, and rear poultry—there are not such ducks and chickens as Bessy's for ten miles round. Ask madam—she always deals with Bessy, and so do all the gentlefolks between here and Belford."

"I am not saying a word against Bessy," replied Farmer White; "she's a good girl, and a pretty girl, as I said before; and I am very sorry for the whole affair. But the Holm Farm is a largish concern, and will take a good sum of money to stock it—more money than I can command; and Augusta Brookes, besides what her father can do for her at his death, has four hundred pounds of her own left her by her grandmother, which, with what I can spare, will be about enough for the purpose; and that made me think of the match, though the matter is still quite unsettled. You know, Master Matthew, one can't expect that Bessy, good girl as she is, should have any money——"

"Oh, that's it!" exclaimed the old man of the mats. "You don't object to the wench then, nor to her old grandfather, if 'twas not for the money?"

"Not in the least," replied the farmer; "she's a good girl, and a pretty girl. I like her full as well as Augusta Brookes, and I am afraid that Jem likes her much better. And, as for yourself, Master Matthew, why I've

known you these fifty years, and never heard man, woman, or child speak a misword of you in my life. I respect you, man! And I am heartily sorry to vex you, and that good little girl yonder. Don't cry so, Bessy; pray don't cry!" And the good-natured farmer well-nigh cried for company.

"No, don't cry, Bessy, because there's no need," rejoined her grandfather. "I thought mayhap it was out of pride that Farmer White would not suffer Jem to marry my little girl. But, since it's only the money," continued the old man, fumbling amidst a vast variety of well-patched garments, until from the pocket of some under-jacket he produced a greasy brown leather book — "since 't is only Miss 'Gusta's money that's wanted to stock the Holm, why that's but reasonable; and we'll see whether your four hundred won't go as far as hers. Look at them dirty bits of paper, farmer—they're of the right sort, an't they?" cried Matthew, with a chuckle. "I called 'em in, because I thought they'd be wanted for her portion, like; and, when the old matmaker dies, there'll be a hundred or two more into the bargain. Take the money, man, can't ye? and dont look so 'stounded. It's honestly come by, I promise you,—all 'dustry and 'conomy, like. Her father he was 'dustrious, and he left her a bit; and her mother, she was 'dustrious too, and she left her a bit; and I, thof I should not say it, have been 'dustrious all my life; and she, poor thing, is more 'dustrious than any o' us. Ay, that's right. Give her a hearty kiss, man; and call in Jem—I'll warrant he's not far off—and we'll fix the wedding-day over a jug of home-brewed. And madam there," pursued the happy old man, as with most sincere congratulations and good wishes I rose to depart, "madam, there, who looks so pleased and speaks so kindly, may be sure of her mat. I'm a 'dustrious man, thof I say it that should not say it; and Bessy's a 'dustrious girl; and, in my mind, there's nothing beats 'dustry in high or in low."

And, with this axiom from the old matmaker, Dash and I took our leave of four as happy people—for by this time Jem had joined the party—as could well be found under the sun.

HESTER.

Amongst the most prominent of the Belfordians who figured at the Wednesday night's club at the King's Arms, was a certain personage, rather broader than he was long, who was known generally through the town by the familiar appellation of Nat Kinlay. By calling, Nat

"Was,—could he help it?—a special attorney;"

by habit and inclination, a thorough good fellow—played the best rubber, sang the best song, told the best story, made the best punch—and drank the most of it when made, of any man in Belford. Besides these accomplishments, he was eminently agreeable to men of all ranks; had a pleasant word for everybody; was friendly with the rich, generous to the poor, never out of spirits, never out of humour, and, in spite of the quips and cranks in which he delighted, never too clever for his company; the most popular person in the place was, beyond all doubt, Nat Kinlay.

In spite, however, of his universal popularity, and of a gentle tendency to overrate his colloquial talents, no attorney in the town had so little employment. His merits made against him in his profession almost as strongly as his faults: frank, liberal, open-hearted, and indulgent, as well as thoughtless, careless, daring, and idle; a despiser of worldly wisdom, a hater of oppression, and a reconciler of strife—he was about the last person to whom the crafty, the overbearing, or the litigious, would resort for aid or counsel. The prudent were repelled by his heedlessness and procrastination, and the timid alarmed at his levity; so that the circumstance which he told as a good joke at the club, of a spider having spun a web over the lock of his office-door (as over the poor-box in Hogarth's famous picture), was no uncommon occurrence at his residence. Except by a few of the poorest and wildest of his boon companions,—penniless clients, who lived at his table all the while their suits were pending, and took care to disappear just before their cause was lost,—the mysterious looking brass knob, with "Office-Bell" underneath it, at Mr. Kinlay's excellent house in Queen-street, remained unrung from term to term.

Startling as such a circumstance would have seemed to most professional men, it was long before this total absence of profitable employment made the slightest impression on Nat Kinlay. The son of an affluent tradesman in a distant county, he had been articled to a solicitor, rather as a step in station, an advance towards gentility, than with any view to the money-making facilities of that lucrative calling. His father, judging from his own frugal habits, thought that Nat, the only child amongst a large family of wealthy brothers, would have money enough, without making himself a slave to the law; and when the early death of his parents put him in possession of thirty thousand pounds lawful money of Great Britain, besides the great draper's shop in the little town of Cranley where that money had been accumulated,—to say nothing of the stock and good-will, and divers messuages and tenements, gardens and crofts, in and about the aforesaid town—Nat was most decidedly of the same opinion.

But, extravagant in every sense of the word, luxurious in his habits, prodigal in his gene-

rosity, expensive in his tastes, easy and uncalculating as a child, the thirty thousand pounds, between building and driving, and card-playing and good-fellowship—(for sporting he was too unwieldy and too idle, or that would undoubtedly have been added to the catalogue of the spendthrift's sins,) the thirty thousand pounds melted away like snow in the sunshine; the produce of the shop, gardens, crofts, messuages, and tenements—even the humble dwelling in which his father had been born, and his grandfather had laid the foundation of the family prosperity in the humble vocation of a tailor,—disappeared with equal rapidity; and Nat Kinlay was on the very verge of ruin, when the death of a rich uncle relieved him from his difficulties, and enabled him to recommence his career of dissipation.

In the course of a few years his funds were again nearly exhausted, and again he was relieved by the bequest of a doting aunt, whom two of her brothers, indignant at the hope of the house, had made their heiress; and the only lesson that her dutiful nephew drew from this second and near approach of poverty, was a vague confidence in his own good fortune, and that callousness to a particular danger which is the result of repeated escape from the same sort of peril. Good advice, which, of all valuable commodities, is the one most frequently wasted, was particularly thrown away in his case; he trusted in his lucky star —Napoleon himself not more implicitly—and replied to his friendly advisers only by a knowing wink, a good-humoured nod, and a scrap of some gay Anacreontic:

> "Pleased let us trifle life away,
> And think of care when we grow old,"

might have been his motto.

This faith in his peculiar good fortune was not diminished in his own eyes, or in those of his flatterers, when, just as Aunt Dorothy's tens of thousands were going where so many tens of thousands had gone before, Nat had the happiness to secure the affections of a very amiable woman of considerable fortune, and far greater expectations, since she was the presumptive heiress of her mother's brother, with whom she had resided during the greater part of her life, and who was a man of ancient family and large landed property in the neighbourhood.

He, it is true, opposed the match as violently as a man well could do. His partialities and his prejudices were equally against such a connexion. His affection for his niece made him dread the misery which must follow a union with a confirmed spendthrift; and his own personal habits rendered him exceedingly averse to parting with one who had been for so many years his principal companion and friend. That a young woman educated by him in a stately retirement, immured amidst the splendid solitude of Cranley Park in the pursuits of art and of literature, should "abase her eyes" on a low-born and unlettered prodigal many years older than herself, without even the attraction of personal graces; that Elizabeth Chudleigh, the steadiest of the steady, the gravest of the grave, demure and pensive as a nun, should be in love with Nat Kinlay,—seemed to her uncle not merely monstrous, but impossible.

Such, however, was the case. And, perhaps, many of the striking discrepancies that existed between them in character and situation tended to foster their mutual affection rather than to check its growth. To Nat, little accustomed to the best female society, the gentle reserve and quiet elegance of Elizabeth, accidentally thrown in his way at the house of a neighbouring gentleman, proved infinitely more captivating than the mere girlish prettiness, or the showy dashing vulgar style of beauty, with which he was familiar; whilst she——Oh! have we not all seen some sage and sedate damsel of six-and-twenty—staid, demure, and coy, as the prude of Pope's and Cibber's days —carried off her feet by the mere charm of a buoyant, merry, light-hearted rattle, thoughtless, generous, and good-natured? Alas! the tale is common. And the want of good looks in the hero of the present story (though his head was good, and his figure at four or five-and-thirty was by no means so unsightly as it afterwards became,) was amply compensated by manners so agreeable, and a kindness so real, that personal beauty seemed as nothing in the comparison. There was a spice of romance in the affair too,—a horse that had run away, and had been stopped by the courage and address of the gentleman; so poor Elizabeth said, and thought, that he had saved her life. Could she do less than devote that life to his happiness? And when he vowed that, with her for his companion and guide, he should never go astray again, could she do less than believe him?

Accordingly the lady being of age, her parents dead, and her own fortune absolutely in her power, they were married, with no other drawback to her happiness than the total and solemn renunciation of the kind uncle who had been to her as a parent. Nat indeed, with his usual sanguine spirit, made sure of his relenting; but Elizabeth, better acquainted with the determined and somewhat stubborn temper which they had to encounter, felt a sad foreboding that the separation was final. She soon, however, forgot this evil in the bustle and excitement of the wedding excursion, and in the total alteration of scene and of habits which ensued upon their settling down into married life.

One of the few stipulations which his fair bride had made was, that Nat should change his residence and resume his profession. Accordingly he bought the house and business of old John Grove, one of the most thriving

practitioners that ever laid down the law in Belford, and soon became an eminent and popular denizen of the good town, where he passed his time much to his satisfaction, in furnishing and altering his already excellent house, throwing out bow-windows, sticking up verandas, adding to the coach-houses and stables, erecting a conservatory, and building a garden-wall. He took a pasture farm about half-a-mile off, stocked it with cattle, built a fancy dairy, and bought a flock.

These were his graver extravagances, his business way of spending money. Society, or rather perhaps company in all varieties and degrees, formed his gayer mode of outlay. Parties at home and parties abroad, club-dinners and tavern-suppers,—meetings of all sorts and degrees, so that they ended in cards and jollity, from the patrician reunions of the hunt, to which his good songs, and good stories, and good-humour gained him admittance, down to the pigeon-shooting matches at the Rose and Crown, of which he was the idol,—wine and billiards, whist and punch,—divided his days and nights amongst them; and poor Elizabeth soon found how truly her uncle had prophesied when he had told her, that to marry Nat Kinlay was to give herself to present care and future penury. She did not cease to love him; perhaps she would have suffered less if she had. Selfish, utterly and basely selfish, as he was in pursuing his own ignoble pleasures at the expense of his wife's happiness, there was still that about him which it was impossible to dislike—a sweet and merry temper, a constant kindness of look and of word, and a never-failing attention to procure everything which he even fancied could give her pleasure; so that Elizabeth, who, conscientiously refraining from every sort of personal expense, took care never to express the desires which he would be so sure to have gratified, often wondered how he could have divined her wishes and her tastes. No woman could dislike such a husband.

They had no child; but after they had been two or three years married, a beautiful little girl, about four years old, fair as alabaster, with shining ringlets of the texture and colour of undyed silk, made her appearance in Queen-street. They called her Hester; and Mrs. Kinlay said to those of her acquaintance whom she thought entitled to an explanation, that the child was an orphan whom Mr. Kinlay had permitted her to adopt. It was observed that, once when she had made this declaration before him, the tears stood in his eyes, and he caught up the little girl in seeming play, and buried his face in her silky curls to conceal his emotion. One or two of his old Cranley friends remembered, too, a vague story concerning a pretty country-girl in that neighbourhood. She had died—and some had said that she had died in childbed, about four years before; and her name had been Hetty. Be that as it might, the little Hester was firmly established in the house, the darling of the gay and jovial master, and perhaps even more decidedly the comfort of his mild and pensive wife.

Time wore on; Hester was seven, eight, nine years old, and this, the fourth fortune that he had spent, began to wax low. Elizabeth's prudence had somewhat retarded the evil day, but poverty was fast approaching; and, with all his confidence in his own good fortune, and in her uncle's relenting, even Nat began to be conscious of his situation. Of the forgiveness of her rich relation, indeed, she well knew that there was no hope. Bad news seldom fails to reach those most interested; and she had heard from authority which she could not doubt, that the adoption of Hester had annihilated all chance of pardon. Severely strict in his own morals, the bringing home that motherless innocent seemed in his eyes a dereliction of feminine dignity, of wifely delicacy,—an encouragement of libertinism and vice, which nothing could induce him to tolerate. He was inexorable; and Elizabeth, determined not to abandon the helpless child, loved her the better for the injustice of which she was the object.

In herself, Hester was singularly interesting. Surrounded by comforts and luxuries, and the object of constant and affectionate attention from both Mr. and Mrs. Kinlay, there was about her a touch of thoughtfulness and melancholy, a mild and gentle pensiveness, not a little striking in so young a girl. Nat, when at home, spent more than half his time in playing with and caressing her; but his jokes, usually so exhilarating, failed to enliven Hester: she smiled at them indeed, or rather she smiled at him with fond and innocent gratitude; but no one ever remembered to have heard her laugh; and to read, or rather devour, in the room which she was permitted to call hers, whatever books she could come by, or to wander in the extensive and highly-cultivated garden with a beautiful Italian greyhound belonging to Mrs. Kinlay, or to ramble with the same graceful companion through the picturesque fields of the Dairy Farm, formed the lonely child's dearest amusements. Whether this unusual sadness proceeded from her being so entirely without companions of her own age, or was caught unconsciously from Mrs. Kinlay's evident depression, and from an intuitive perception, belonging to children of quick feeling, that beneath an outer show of gaiety all was not going well—or whether it were a mere accident of temperament, none could ascertain. Perhaps each of these causes might combine to form a manner most unusual at her age; a manner so tender, so gentle, so diffident, so full of pleading sweetness, that it added incalculably to the effect of her soft and delicate beauty. Her look seemed to implore at once for love and for pity; and hard

must have been the heart that could resist such an appeal.

Every day increased Hester's sadness and Mrs. Kinlay's depression; but the reckless gaiety of the master of the house suffered no diminution. It had, however, changed its character. The buoyancy and light-heartedness had vanished; even the confidence in his inalienable good fortune was sensibly lessened—it was not, however, gone. No longer expecting a pardon from his wife's offended kinsman, and not yet hardened enough to wish, or at least to confess to himself in the face of his own conscience that he wished, for his death, he nevertheless allowed himself (so do we cheat our own souls) to think that, if he should die, either without a will, or with a will drawn up in a relenting mood, all would again go right, and he be once more prosperous and happy; and, this train of ideas once admitted, he soon began to regard as a certainty the speedy death of a temperate and hale man of sixty, and the eventual softening of one of the most stern and stubborn hearts that ever beat in a human bosom. His own relations had forgiven him:—why should not his wife's? They had died just as the money was urgently wanted:—why should not he?

He was not, however, so thoroughly comfortable in this faith but that he followed the usual ways of a man going down in the world, spending more prodigally than ever to conceal the approach of poverty, and speculating deeply and madly in hopes of retrieving his broken fortunes. He played higher than ever, bought brood-mares and merino flocks, took shares in canals and joint-stock companies; and having in his prosperous days had the ill fortune to pick up at a country broker's a dirty, dingy landscape, which when cleaned turned out to be a Both, (ever since which unlucky moment he had fancied himself a connoisseur,) he filled his house with all the rubbish to be picked up in such receptacles of trash, whether in town or country,—Raphaels from Swallow-street, and Claudes from the Minories.

These measures had at least the effect of shortening the grievous misery of suspense without hope, the lingering agony of waiting for ruin. Almost as soon as poor Nat knew the fact himself—perhaps even before—his creditors discovered that he was penniless, and that his debts far exceeded his assets; a docket was struck, assignees appointed, the whole property given up, (for Mrs. Kinlay, in her imprudent and hasty marriage, had neglected the precaution of having even a part of her own money settled upon herself,) and the destitute family removed to London. Only a month before, Juliet, the graceful Italian greyhound, had died, and Hester had grieved (as older and wiser persons than Hester do grieve) over the loss of her pretty favourite; but now, as for the last time she paced mournfully those garden-walks where Juliet had so often gambolled at her side, and sat for the last time on the soft turf under the great mulberry-tree where they had so often played together, she felt that Juliet, lying peacefully in her quiet grave amidst a bed of the pure and fragrant rose unique, had escaped a great evil, and that, if it pleased God, she could be content to die too.

Still more did that feeling grow upon her on their removal to a dark and paltry lodging in a dreary suburb of that metropolis where every rank and degree, from the most wretched penury to the most splendid affluence, finds its appropriate home. A wretched home was theirs;—small without comfort, noisy without cheerfulness, wanting even the charm of cleanliness or the solace of hope. Nat's spirit sank under the trial. Now, for the first time, he viewed before his eyes, he felt in his very heart's core, the miserable end of a life of pleasure; and, when he looked around him and saw the two beings whom he loved best on earth involved in the irremediable consequences of his extravagance; condemned, for his fault, to sordid drudgery and squalid want; punished, not merely in his own self-indulgent and luxurious habits, but in his fondest and purest affections,—his mind and body gave way under the shock; he was seized with a dangerous illness, and, after lying for many weeks at the point of death, arose, weak as an infant, to suffer the pains and penalties of a premature old age, and that worst penalty of all—the will but not the power of exertion! Oh, if he could but have called back one year of wasted strength, of abused intellect! The wish was fruitless, in a worldly sense; but his excellent wife wept tears of joy and sorrow over the sincere though tardy expiation.

She had again written to her uncle, and had received a harsh and brief reply:—"Leave the husband who is unworthy of you, and the child—his child—whom his influence prevailed on you to adopt, and I consent to receive you to my heart and my dwelling; but, never whilst you cling with a fond preference to these degrading connexions—never, even if one should die, until you abandon both, will I assist you as a friend, or own you as a kinswoman."

Mrs. Kinlay felt this letter to be final, and applied no more. Indeed, had she wished to address the obdurate writer, she knew not where to direct to him; for she ascertained from an old friend in the neighbourhood of Cranley that, a few weeks after the date of this letter, he left his beautiful residence, the seat of the family for many generations,—that the house was shut up, the servants discharged, and nothing known of the master beyond a vague report that he was gone abroad.

That hope over, they addressed themselves to the task of earning a humble living, and were fortunate enough to find an old friend, a solicitor of great practice and high character,

who, although he had of late years shunned the prosperous prodigal, was most ready to assist the needy and repentant one. Nat, always quick, adroit, and neat-handed, had been in his youth a skilful engrosser; and Mr. Osborne, finding on trial that he could depend upon him, not only employed him in his office when his failing health allowed him to leave the house, but trusted him with deeds to take home, in the completion and sometimes the entire execution of which Mrs. Kinlay, applying herself to master the difficulties of the art, proved a most able and willing assistant. Hester, too, helped them and waited on them to the extent of her little power; and, once plunged into the healthful tide of virtuous industry and active exertion, the impoverished family found their sufferings greatly diminished. Even poor Nat, after a hard day's scrivening, felt his mind lightened and his conscience soothed. But this was a solace that become more and more rare; the attacks of disease pressed on him with increasing frequency and added severity, and Mrs. Kinlay and Hester were the chief bread-winners of the family.

In the meanwhile, all their property at Belford had been disposed of,—plate, china, linen, the superb collection of greenhouse and hot-house plants, the trumpery pictures and the handsome furniture; and, persons not otherwise unfeeling, had committed the common but unfeeling act of crowding emulously to the sale, and talking quietly over the ruin of the acquaintance whom, not a month before, they had visited and liked,—for not to like Mrs. Kinlay, under all the disadvantage of low spirits, was impossible. Even the dairy-house, with its pretty garniture of old china and Dutch tiles, was dismantled and sold off; a dividend was paid on the debts, and every trace of poor Nat was swept away from Belford; the house where he had resided, which had hung longest on hand, as being almost too expensive a residence for a town, having at last found a purchaser, who, if outward indications might be trusted, was as different as possible from its late jovial but unthrifty proprietor.

The new occupant, who took possession in the dusk of the evening and retired immediately to the back drawing-room, which had been fitted up for his reception, kept himself so close within his citadel, the garden and the apartments looking into it, (the shutters of the front windows not being even opened,) that the inhabitants of Queen-street, especially our friend Mrs. Colby, who lodged in one of a row of small houses nearly opposite, and kept a pretty keen look-out on her neighbours, particularly on a fresh arrival, began to think that they had been misinformed as to the sale of the house, and that a cross-looking old woman, and a strong homely country-girl who seemed to officiate under her as a drudge, and might be seen every morning upon her knees scrubbing the steps before the door, (those steps which no foot ever defiled!) were merely put in by the assignees to take care of the premises. Influenced by these suspicions, Mrs. Colby, who felt at once defrauded and affronted by not being able to answer the natural questions respecting her opposite neighbour, and not even knowing whether she had an opposite neighbour or not, took an opportunity one fine morning, when both the young and the old woman were at the door, the one at her usual scrubbery, the other taking in some butcher's meat, to inquire if their master were arrived. The poor lady took nothing by her motion; the Cinderella-looking maid was stupid, and cried Anan! the crone was surly, and banged the door in her face. No inquiry ever appeared more completely baffled; and yet Mrs. Colby had pretty nearly satisfied herself as to the ostensible object of her question, (*i. e.* whether the purchaser were arrived,) having caught a glimpse in the tray (our friend Stephen Lane used to say that Mrs. Colby could see through a deal board) of some prime rump-steaks and a quarter of house-lamb, viands usually reserved for a master's table; and having also discerned, standing a little back in the passage, as if cogitating the question 'Shall I bark?' a beautiful Italian greyhound, so closely resembling the deceased Juliet, who had been of Mrs. Colby's acquaintance, that if such a thing as the ghost of a dog had been ever heard of, and that shrewd and unimaginative lady had been a believer in the unprofitable mysteries of the Gothic superstition, the light and graceful little animal might have passed for an apparition.

A week, nay a month passed away, and still Mrs. Colby, although keeping constant watch, had not been fortunate enough to see the stranger. It would almost seem that he had returned her compliment, and kept watch over her goings and comings likewise; for twice at least, as she had the mortification to hear, he had gone out during the short time that she had been off guard; once, as it appeared, to visit the nursery-garden, fresh stock the hothouses and greenhouses, and hire suitable gardeners; the second time, to exchange his roomy and excellently situated pew in St. Stephen's church, (in the fitting up of which poor Nat had spent much money,) for a small niche in an obscure nook, which had no earthly recommendation but that of being close to a side-door at which the occupant might go out or come in without observation, and being so placed that it could be surmounted by a brass rod and a green curtain without causing annoyance or inconvenience to any one.

This last circumstance gave an insight into his character which every subsequent indication strengthened and confirmed. The man was evidently that plant of English growth

called an oddity. He neither received nor returned visits, made no acquaintance and seemed to have no associate in the world besides his cross housekeeper and his beautiful dog. Gradually he fell into the habit of going into the streets, and entering the shops to which business called him; and then it was seen that he was a tall, erect, elderly gentleman, muscular and well proportioned, with a fine intellectual head, bald on the crown and forehead, and surrounded by short curly dark hair scarcely touched with grey, a firm intelligent countenance, and a general air of careless gentility—the air of one too sure of his station to take anything like trouble in its assertion.

After a time he began to haunt the booksellers' shops, and showed himself a man well acquainted not only with literature, but with bibliography,—a hunter after choice editions, and a dear lover of that perhaps not very extensive class of scarce works which are valuable for other qualities besides their scarcity. In the old English drama particularly, and old ballads and romances in all languages, he was curious; and his library would have formed as good a subject for a grand incremation, in the hands of the Curate and Barber, as that of Don Quixote himself, whom he also emulated in the liberality of his orders and his total regardlessness of expense.

Another of his haunts was the shop of an intelligent printseller in the town, whom he employed in burnishing the frames and assisting him to hang a small but splendid collection of the finest Italian masters,—such pictures as it was sin and shame to shut up within doors more rigidly barred than those of a prison, inasmuch as none could find entrance; and such as collectors—who, even the most tasteful, often find the pleasure their pictures afford to their own eyes not a little enhanced by their value in the eyes of others—are generally ready enough to display.

From the report made by the printseller of these magnificent paintings, and of the richness and tastefulness of the furniture, together with his large orders and punctual payments amongst the different tradespeople of the town, a strong and probably exaggerated notion of the recluse's great wealth began to prevail amongst the genteel—that is to say, the idle circles of Belford, to whom, in the absence of individual occupation, anything in the shape of mystery and news proved a welcome resource from the sameness and *ennui* of their general condition. During six months that he had been in the place, nothing more had been known of him than that his newspapers came addressed to Oliver Carlton, Esq. Beyond that, not a tittle of intelligence had Mrs. Colby been able to extract from the postman. He could not even tell her what the papers were; and she felt that it would somewhat have mitigated the fever of curiosity to know whether Mr. Carlton (if Carlton were indeed his name—if he were not rather some illustrious incognito,) amused his solitude by the perusal of the Times or the Chronicle, the Standard or the Courier. Then she could at least have guessed at his politics, have learnt to think of him as Whig or Tory. Now he was worse than the Veiled Prophet—the most provoking puzzle in existence!

This feeling was shared in no small degree by our friend King Harwood; for if curiosity ever were a female monopoly, (which, by the by, I have not the slightest intention of admitting,) that time has long since passed away, and this identical personage, Mr. King Harwood, was in himself a bright example of a man possessing as much inquisitiveness and impertinent curiosity as all the sex put together. He it was who proposed to Mrs. Colby to storm Mr. Carlton's castle severally, and see whether their united powers or observation could not elicit some circumstance that might tend to elucidate the mystery; and, after some hesitation, Mrs. Colby consented; she being armed with the fair pretence of charity, as one of the lady collectors of a penny society; whilst King had provided himself with a letter from a young clergyman, who was standing for an evening lectureship at a public institution in London, and had requested Earl Harwood to canvass any of the governors with whom he chanced to be acquainted, enclosing a list in which appeared the name of Oliver Carlton.

Furnished with this document, our friend the beau approached, though with some caution, the grand object of his curiosity—the Bluebeard's chamber of Queen street. The point of admission had been regarded by both parties as a question of considerable difficulty, "Not at home" being the regular answer to all visiters; and our adventurer had determined to watch Mr. Carlton home to dinner, and walk boldly after him into the house; a plan which was the more easily accomplished, as the milkman, happening to stop at the door at the same instant, favoured the manœuvre, by engaging the attention of the stupid maid, who answered her master's knock. What passed between them, we have no business to know. Mr. Harwood would not tell, and Mr. Carlton did not; (even Mrs. Colby's ingenuity could not extract more from the crest-fallen King, than that the interview had been short and decisive,) indeed having been watching him from her window with Dr. Fenwick's stop-watch in her hand, she knew that the time which elapsed between this stealthy entrance and his rapid exit was exactly four minutes and forty-three seconds, and that Mr. Carlton was a brute! Upon which encouragement, Mrs. Colby forthwith took up the Society's documents, and marched over the way herself—curious, perhaps, to know what sort of brute she might find him.

The lady was admitted without difficulty, and found herself, with a facility which she had not expected, and which put her a good deal out of her play, in the presence of Mr. Carlton, and compelled by his manner to plunge at once into the affairs of the charity. "A penny society!" exclaimed her host, with an expression of sarcasm which only a long habit of scorn can give to any lips; "you come for a penny subscription! Madam, I have just had the honour of a visit from a gentleman, who is, he tells me, called King—King, doubtless, of the Busybodies! Do not compel me to tell a lady that she is well fitted to be their Queen."

And Mrs. Colby found it convenient to take up her papers and march off, as her luckless predecessor had done before her.

From this time Mr. Carlton continued inaccessible and unmolested, holding intercourse with none but the poor of the place, whom he relieved with great munificence and some caprice. He was evidently a man of fortune and education; of retired and studious habits, of very good principles, and very bad temper (soured probably by some domestic calamity, for it is our English way to quarrel with the whole world if injured by one individual); and as the Belford people got used to his oddities, and ceased to watch his comings and goings, and he, in his turn, came to regard the persons amongst whom he lived no more than the passing and unobservant crowds of London or Paris — those mighty streams of human life, amongst which an isolated individual is but as a drop of water in a great river, — his dislike to being seen insensibly wore away, and he walked in and out of his house as freely and quietly as his neighbours.

It was now more than four years since the Kinlays had left Belford, and little had been heard of them during their absence. Poor Nat, who, at his height of popularity, had won only the undesirable distinction of being liked, but not esteemed even by the thoughtless, whilst by the sober-minded he was universally condemned, had been succeeded by another "good fellow" amongst the parties which he frequented, whose newer songs and fresher jokes had entirely effaced the memory of their old boon companion — such are the friendships of men of pleasure!—whilst his wife, though universally respected, had shrunk so completely from every sort of intimacy, that, amongst her many acquaintances, there was not one who lived with her upon more familiar terms than is implied by a polite interchange of visits. Well-wishers she had many, friends she had none; and almost the first tidings that were heard of her in Belford during those three years were, that she had returned there a widow; that her husband had died after a tedious illness; and that she herself, in a state of failing health and utter poverty, had arrived in the town, accompanied only by Hester, had taken a small lodging nearly opposite her own old house, and intended to support herself by needlework.

Why she chose for her place of abode a spot so well calculated to revive melancholy recollections, can be accounted for only on the principle which none can understand, but all have felt, that endears to us the scene of past sufferings. This was undoubtedly her chief reason; although she sometimes said to herself, with desperate calmness, "This is my parish, and I will not give the overseers the trouble of removing me in case I am compelled to apply to them." Another cause for her fixing in Belford might be found in its being the residence of a favourite old servant, now a respectable mantuamaker in the town, who was likely to be useful to her in procuring employment, and to whom, in case of her own death, she could entrust the child of her pity and her love—her own dear Hester.

Through this attached old servant,—why did I say that she had no friend in Belford?—it was soon made known to the ladies of the place that Mrs. Kinlay declined all visiting and all assistance, but would be thankful for employment at her needle, at the customary rate of payment; and she and Hester (her zealous and most efficient assistant) were soon in full occupation; any interval in the supply of plain-work (always so precarious) being supplied by dresses or millinery, to begin or to finish, from the shop of their humble but faithful friend Mrs. Boyd.

Hester, for whom Mrs. Kinlay felt that she had sacrificed much, and whom she loved all the better for that sacrifice, was a most sweet and gentle creature. Tall of her age—slender and graceful, though rather with a bending willowy grace—than the erect deportment of the dancing-school—with a profusion of curling hair darkened into the soft colour of the ripe hazel-nut, a skin fair and polished as that of the garden-lily, a high open forehead, a mild grey eye, and a cheek pale until she spoke or smiled, and then glowing with the very tint of the maiden-blush-rose: all this—and, above all this, that smile so full of tenderness and sweetness, and that timid manner, and that low and pleading voice, were irresistibly charming. And her mind was as charming as her person. Wholly unaccomplished, since for accomplishments she had had no time, she had yet had the great and solid advantage of the society of a refined and cultivated woman, who talked to her not as a child to be instructed, but as a companion, to whom she was pouring out the fulness of her own knowledge and information, and unlocking the stores of a memory rich, above all, in the highest poetry of our language. Even the drudgery of the quill, had had its use in Hester's education, first by forming her mind to habits of patient attention, and then by allowing her, when the mystery was conquered and

the task of copying was become merely mechanical, long intervals for silent thought. So that, at little more than thirteen years of age, her reflective and somewhat imaginative character had the maturity of twenty; those circumstances of her situation which would be commonly called disadvantages having acted upon her mind as the wind and rain of March upon the violet, strengthening the flower, and raising it into a richer tint and more exceeding fragrance.

Her pleasure in returning to Belford,—"to the country," as she fondly called it—was excessive. Accustomed to fresh air and clear sunny light, the closeness and gloom of London had seemed to double the labour to which she had been condemned; and to inhabit again a street on the very outskirts of the town, in which three minutes' run would lead her through the by-lane she knew so well, into the beautiful meadows and pastures of the Dairy Farm, was a blessing for which she could never, she thought, be sufficiently grateful. A few "natural tears she shed" to the memory of her kind protector—her father, as she had been taught to call him; but for herself, and even for her dear mother (for "mother" was the fond name by which she had always been permitted to address Mrs. Kinlay), she was full of hope. "The air would restore that dear mother's health, and *she* should be able to support them both—she was sure she should. Half an hour's run in the fields and lanes in the early morning, or in the dusk of twilight, and a long, long ramble every Sunday afternoon, would make her strong enough for any exertion; she wished her dear mother would let her work only for one week without helping her—she was sure she could keep them both." And as she said this, her sweet face gladdened and glowed with her earnestness, the sad expression vanished, and she looked as happy and as hopeful as she really felt.

Neither she nor Mrs. Kinlay had made any inquiry respecting their opposite neighbour, the occupier of the house where they had lived for so many years. Their landlady, a well-intentioned but very common person, was not of a class to tempt them into any communication on a subject so painful and so affecting; and Mrs. Boyd—who had lived with Mrs. Kinlay from childhood, had pressed her coming to Belford, and had engaged for her her present lodging, with a vague intimation that she thought the situation would be beneficial, and hoped her dear mistress would not object to its vicinity to her former dwelling—had never entered on the subject. Ten days had passed without their happening to see their misanthropic neighbour, when one bright autumn morning, (for it was early in October that they arrived in Queen-street,) Hester sitting at work at the open window, her landlady and Mrs. Kinlay being both in the room, saw him issue from his own door followed by the beautiful Italian greyhound, and exclaimed at its resemblance to her own regretted pet, her faithful Juliet: "Never was such a likeness!" cried she; "look! dear mother! only look!"

"It's Mr. Carlton and his dog—Romeo, I think they call him," observed the landlady, advancing to the window.

"Romeo! how strange! my dog's name was Juliet," replied Hester. "Do, dearest mother, come and see how like this little dog is to her in all her pretty ways. See how he frisks round his master and jumps almost into his arms! Pray look!"

And turning round to demand still more earnestly Mrs. Kinlay's attention, she saw her leaning back in her chair pale and motionless, the needlework on which she had been employed fallen from her hands, and her whole appearance and attitude bespeaking her inability to speak or move. She had not fainted, and yet she seemed scarcely conscious of the caresses of poor Hester, or of her efforts to revive and rouse her. Her first articulate words were a desire to see Mrs. Boyd; and by the time she arrived, Mrs. Kinlay was sufficiently collected to send the anxious girl for a walk, while she conversed in private with their humble but faithful friend.

The result of this consultation was a long letter written by Mrs. Kinlay and dispatched to the post-office by Mrs. Boyd; and, until the reply arrived on the second morning, an evident increase of illness and agitation on the part of the writer.

This reply consisted of a large packet, apparently, as Hester thought from a transient glance which she was too delicate to repeat, of her dear mother's own letter returned with two or three lines in the envelope. Whatever might be the contents, the effect was exquisitely painful! Inured as the unhappy lady had long been to suffering, this stroke seemed the most severe of any, and Hester could scarcely repress the affectionate anxiety which prompted her twenty times a day to implore that this new grief might be confided to her. Someway or other she could not avoid connecting it in her own mind with Romeo and his master; she even thought that the name of Carlton came across her as a sound once familiar; she could not recall when she had heard it, or where—the trace on her memory was faint and indistinct as the recollection of a dream—but assuredly the name was not new to her. Again and again she was on the point of making some inquiry either of Mrs. Kinlay or of Mrs. Boyd; but respect in the one instance and delicacy in the other—and, above all, the early and salutary habit of self-restraint—withheld her from touching on the subject. The only approach to it that she ventured was a remark on the singular coincidence of the name in the two dogs: "Romeo and Juliet—surely it was strange!"

"Both are common names for Italian greyhounds," was Mrs. Kinlay's quiet reply; and nothing more passed between them.

In the mean while Christmas approached, and the invalid's health became more and more precarious; and their united labours (although liberally paid) became more and more inadequate to the additional expenses of winter and of sickness. Mrs. Kinlay, whose hoard of jewels and trinkets had been nearly exhausted by the long illness and the burial of her husband, now disposed even of her laces and linens, reserving nothing but mere necessaries for herself and Hester, and a small but beautiful and valuable repeater—the last gift, as she said, of a dear friend.

This resource and Hester's incessant labours kept them through the dark months; for the poor child found that November, and December, and January could be dark even out of London: and the winter passed away unmarked by any occurrence, except the formation of a warm and lasting friendship between herself and Romeo. One day, by some strange accident, the graceful little creature, shy and timid as a fawn, had lost his master, missed him in some of the booksellers' and printsellers' shops that he frequented; and when, after a fruitless search, he addressed himself in distress and perplexity to the task of finding his way home, he encountered a tribe of noisy urchins, the pest of the streets, ripe for mischief, who seeing the poor little animal panting and breathless for fear, surrounded it shouting and hooting, halloed their own curs upon it, chased it as if it had been a wild beast, and finally followed it up the street with the cry of "A mad dog!"

In this plight, Hester, going to the chemist's for medicine, met the worried and bewildered little creature, who, on her calling "Romeo!" came to her at once, and sprang into her arms; and little as the slight gentle girl seemed calculated to encounter the small mob of mischievous boys already emulating the hero of Hogarth's Progress of Cruelty, and promising candidates for a similar catastrophe, yet, strong in womanly scorn and righteous indignation, she succeeded in rescuing her trembling protegé and kept his pursuers at bay until, still carrying him in her arms, she took refuge with her frightened charge in a respectable shop. There she sat down with him in her lap, and soothed and caressed him until his fear seemed lost in love and gratitude to his fair preserver. Dogs are great physiognomists,—that is admitted on all hands; they are also voice-fanciers; and Romeo showed his discrimination in both these points, by being never weary of looking at his new friend's sweet face, or of listening to her melodious tones. They were obliged to part, for Hester felt it a point of duty to return him as speedily as might be to the master who seemed to love nothing else in the world, and accordingly she took him to the door before he had been even missed; but from that moment an attachment of the warmest kind was established between them. Romeo loved Hester as the most grateful of all animals loves those who have served him;* and Hester loved Romeo with that still stronger and more delightful affection which a young and generous girl feels for one whom she has served.

Under the guidance of this sentiment, it was quite extraordinary, considering how little either party went out, that they should so often contrive to meet each other. Romeo watched for Hester, and Hester watched for Romeo. It was an innocent romance, a rare instance of a clandestine intercourse without guilt or shame. Whether Mr. Carlton knew of their meetings, never appeared. Mrs. Kinlay did, and felt a pleasure which few things now could give her when Romeo bounded up stairs with Hester to pay her a visit. Frugal as they were, denying themselves all but necessaries, they could not resist the temptation of keeping a supply of the delicate biscuits which that choice and fragile race of dogs are known to prefer to any other food; and Romeo, however difficult to coax into eating at his own home, never refused the cates prepared for him by the fair hands of his new friends. It was a very singular and very genuine attachment.

The winter, although gloomy, had been mild; and even in the Christmas week Hester, who knew every dell where the starry primrose grew, and every hedge-row where the violet blossomed, had cheered the sick-room of Mrs. Kinlay by a nosegay of primroses; whilst during the whole of February she had contrived to find on southern banks, and in nooks sheltered from almost every wind, covered by withered grass or couching amongst short mossy turf, a few, and a very few, early violets;—for those sweet flowers know and obey their season, and although an occasional straggler, tempted by the mildness of the weather, may steal into day, yet the countless multitude, the mass of fragrant blossoms (unlike the primrose, which, provided not checked by frost, will cover the ground in mid-winter,) reserves its simple beauty and its exquisite perfume for its own month of March. And now March had arrived—a March soft and genial as April; and Mrs. Kinlay appearing much revived by the beauty of the weather and the fresh impulse given to all nature by the breath of spring, Hester was most anxious to win her into walking with her one fine Sunday as far as the pastures of the Dairy Farm, now let to an old milkman, who, churlish to all the world, but courteous to Hester, had extended to her, and to her alone, the privilege of gathering violets in his hedgerows. The first day that she had attempted

* Vide note at the end of the story.

to revisit her old haunts, she had found the high-boarded gate which separated the street from the lane—a by-lane running along the side of Mr. Carlton's premises, then winding between a double row of tall elms, and opening into the rich enclosures of the Dairy Farm —she had found the gate triply locked, and had been seen peeping wistfully through the barrier by Giles Cousins, the milkman aforesaid—who had, and not without having fairly earned the title, the reputation of being the veriest churl in Belford—in, as it seemed, the least auspicious moment that could have been chosen for such an encounter, inasmuch as he was in the very act of driving before him a small rabble of riotous boys whom he had caught breaking his fences in search of a gleaning of hazel-nuts. The young imps (some of that same band of ne'er-do-well urchins who subsequently signalized themselves in the attack on poor Romeo) resisted amain, screaming, and shouting, and struggling in all manner of ways; but Giles Cousins, armed with the long and powerful whip with which he was accustomed to gather together a tribe of unruly cows, was too many for the gentlemen. He drove them to the gate, unlocked it, and thrust them forth into the street. Hester was meekly turning away; but the same strong hand that had thrust the rioters out so roughly, kindly seized the gentle girl, and drew her in!

"Miss Hester! to be sure it *is* Miss Hester! and how she is grown! Don't you go, Miss; pray don't you go. You have a right, sure, to come here whenever you choose; and so has madam—I heard she was to come to Belford; and I'll send you a key, to let yourself in as often as you like. The cows are as quiet as quiet can be; and my dame will be glad to see you at the cottage—main glad she'll be. It looks quite natural to see you here again."

"Poor thing!" thought he within himself, as he turned away from Hester's tearful thanks; "poor thing! she must have known hard usage up in London, if a kind word makes her cry. And such a pretty harmless creature as it is! just as harmless-looking as when it was no higher than that dock," (beginning to tug away at the strong-rooted weed) "which Jack Timms ought to be ashamed of himself for not having pulled up, passing it as he does every day, night and morning, and being told of it six times a week into the bargain. Poor Miss Hester!" continued Giles, having by a manful haul succeeded in eradicating his tough and obstinate enemy, and letting his thoughts flow again into their kindly channel—"poor Miss Hester! I must get my mistress to send her a pat of butter now and then, and a few apples from the old orchard; and we must manage to get her and madam to take a drop of milk night and morning. We shall never miss it; and if we did miss it, it's no more than we ought to do. I shall never forget how main kind poor madam was to my mistress and me when we lost our little Sally. To my mind, Miss Hester favours Sally—only she's more delicate, like. We must send her the key and the apples, and manage about the milk."

And, with a downright heartiness and honesty of kindness that Mrs. Kinlay could not resist, the affair of the milk, so great a comfort to an invalid, was managed; and Mrs. Cousins being quite as grateful as her husband, and entertaining the same fancy of Hester's resemblance to the child whom they had lost — the youngest and the favourite, — she had run to the Dairy-house to see them as often as she could; though, so closely was she occupied, that this her brief half-hour's holiday occurred far too rarely for their wishes. Her last visit had been on that Sunday morning, when—in walking up the little path, that led from the gate to the house, between two borders thickly set with bunches of anemones of the rich red and purple, as vivid as those colours in old stained glass, the secret of producing which is said to be lost now-a-days, (luckily Nature never loses *her* secrets,) alternating with tufts of double primroses, and of the pretty plant called by the country-people the milk-blossom, backed first by a row of stocks and wall-flowers, and then by a taller range of gooseberry and currant bushes stealing into leaf—and finally, in arriving at the rustic porch where the sweet-briar was putting forth its first fragrant breath drawn out by the bright sunshine succeeding to a balmy shower, —Hester had felt in its fullest force the sweet influence of the sweetest of the seasons, and had determined, if possible, to persuade Mrs. Kinlay into partaking her enjoyment, so far at least as her strength would permit, by getting, if not to the dwelling itself, at least into some of the nearest meadows of the Dairy Farm.

At the outset of the walk, Hester found with delight that her experiment had succeeded beyond her expectation. The day was delicious — bright, sunny, breezy, — for the light and pleasant air, though still on the wintry side of the vernal equinox, was too mild and balmy to deserve the name of wind,—and her dear companion seemed to feel in its fullest extent the delightful exhilaration so finely described by Gray, who, of all the poets of his own somewhat artificial time, has best succeeded in bringing strikingly and vividly before us the commonest and most familiar feelings of our nature:

> "See the wretch that long has tost
> On the thorny bed of pain
> At length repair his vigour lost,
> And breathe and walk again;
> The meanest floweret of the vale,
> The simplest note that swells the gale,
> The common sun, the air, the skies,
> To him are opening paradise."
>
> *Unfinished Ode on the Pleasures arising from Vicissitude.*—MASON'S *Life of Gray.*

The season and the scenery were alike in harmony with the buoyant sensations of returning health. The glorious sun was careering in the deep blue sky, dappled by a thousand fleecy clouds which floated at a distance around the bright luminary, without for a moment dimming his effulgence: the sunbeams glanced between the tall trees on the grassy margent of the lane, striking on the shining garlands of the holly and ivy with a sparkling radiance; glittering through the dark leaves of the bramble, as though each particular leaf were a pendent emerald; dwelling with a purplish flush on the young shoots of the woodbine; and illumining the tender green of the wintry mosses, and the pure hues of the pale primrose and the crimson-tipped daisy, with a mingled brilliancy and delicacy to which the most glowing colouring of Rubens or of Titian would be faint, dim, and spiritless. A slender brooklet danced sparkling by the roadside; young lambs were bleating in the meadows; the song-thrush and the black-bird were whistling in the hedge-rows; the skylark was chanting overhead; and the whole scene, animate and inanimate, accorded with Mrs. Kinlay's profound and devout feeling of thankfulness to the Providence which, depriving her of artificial luxuries, had yet restored her to the enjoyment of the commonest but purest gifts bestowed on man—the ever-varying and never-cloying beauties of Nature.

She walked on in silence; beguiled, partly by the real charm of the scene and the hour—the shallow pool on the top of which the long grass went trailing—the vigorous and life-like look of the leafless elm, into which one might almost see the sap mounting—the long transparent sprays of the willow, seen between the eye and the sunbeams like rods of ruddy light—the stamped leaves of the budded cowslip—the long wreaths of ground-ivy mingling its brown foliage and purple flowers with the vivid reds and pinks of the wild geranium, and the snowy strawberry blossom lurking in the southern hedge; and partly by thoughts sweet yet mournful—the sweeter perhaps because mournful of friends who had trodden with her that very path in by-gone years, of all that she had felt and all that she had suffered in those quiet scenes;—when, after passing a bit of neglected wild plantation, where the tender green of the young larch contrasted with the dark and dusky hue of the Scotch fir, and the brown sheaths of the horse-chestnut just bursting into leaf; where the yellow flowers of the feathery broom mingled with the deeper gold of the richly scented furze, and the earth was carpeted with primroses springing amidst layers of dropped fir-cones; after passing this wild yet picturesque bit of scenery, which brought still more fully to recollection the faulty but kindly person by whom the little wood had been planned, she became suddenly exhausted, and was glad to sit down to rest on the trunk of a large beech newly cut by the side of the lane, whilst Hester passed into an adjacent field to fill her basket with the violets, whose exquisite odour, drawn out by the sun, penetrated through the hedge and perfumed the sheltered retreat which she had chosen. She sank into her lowly seat with a placid smile, and dismissed her young and affectionate companion to her pleasant labour, with a charge not to hurry—to ramble where she liked, and enjoy the beauty of the flowers, and the summer-like feeling of the light and fragrant air.

And Hester, as she bounded like a fawn into those sunny meadows, abandoned herself to a fulness of enjoyment such as for many years the poor child, surrounded by distress and difficulty, and thoughtful far beyond her years, had not experienced. Every sense was gratified. The sunshine, the flowers, the hum of insects, the song of birds, the delicious breath of spring, and, more than all, that feeling—to her so rare, the unwonted sense of liberty! Well sings the old Scottish Poet—

> Ah! freedom is a noble thing!
> Freedom makes man to have liking!
> Freedom all solace to man gives;
> He lives at ease that freely lives."
>
> BARBER—*The Bruce.*

And Hester tripped along the meadow as light as the yellow butterfly brought into life by that warm sunshine, and as busy as the bee wandering from blossom to blossom. It was a lawn-like series of old pastures, divided by deep ditches, fringed by two or three of the wild irregular plantations, edged by shaggy bits of mossy paling, which I have attempted to describe; and dotted about by little islands of fine timber trees and coppice-like underwood, the reliques of hedge-rows now long cut down, breaking and almost concealing the massy buildings, the towers, and spires of the town. One short bank, crowned by high elms, projected a little way into the pastures like some woody headland, at right angles from the hedge under which she was walking; the hedge being thickly set with white violets, those "pretty daughters of the earth and sun," whilst, all around the lofty elms, the very ground was covered by the deep purple which forms, perhaps, the sweetest variety of the sweetest of plants. In the hedge-row, too, were primroses yellow and lilac and white, all the tints commonly known blossoming under the pearly buds of the blackthorn, those "locked buttons on the gemmed trees;" and Hester, as she stooped to fill her basket, first mused gravely on a problem which has posed wiser heads than hers,—the mystery, still unexplained, of the colouring of flowers—and then, with a natural transition, applied herself to recollecting the different epithets given to these blossoms of spring by the greatest of poets; for Hester loved poetry with an intensity which might be said to have partly

formed her character, and to hear Mrs. Kinlay read Shakspeare, or recite some of the stirring lyrics of his contemporaries, had been the chief solace of her monotonous labours.

"Pale primrose!" said Hester to herself,—"upon faint primrose beds"—"violets dim"—"the nodding violet"—What pictures! and how often he returns to them, so beautifully, and so fondly! surely he must have loved them! And he speaks of the robin-redbreast, too!" added she, as, startled by her gentle movements, the hen-bird flew from her careless mossy nest in a stump of hawthorn, exhibiting her five pale eggs with red spots, to one who would not have harmed them for the fee-simple of Belford. She passed on rapidly, yet cautiously, that the frightened bird might the sooner return to her charge; and arriving under the clump of elms, was amused by another set of nest-builders, those pugnacious birds the rooks, who had a colony overhead, and were fighting for each other's clumsy stick mansions—as if they had been the cleverest architects that ever wore feathers. The sight of these black gentlefolks made a change in the current of Hester's poetical recollections, and she began "crooning" over to herself the elegant and pathetic ballad of "The Three Ravens," one of those simple and tender effusions which have floated down the stream of time, leaving the author still unguessed. Then, by some unperceived link of association, her mind drifted to another anonymous ditty of a still earlier age, the true and pleasant satire called "Sir Penny;" and when she had done with "that little round knave," she by an easy transition began reciting the fine poem entitled "The Soul's Errand," and attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh; and had just arrived at the stanza—

> "Tell fortune of her blindness,
> Tell nature of decay,
> Tell friendship of unkindness,
> Tell justice of delay;
> And if they will reply,
> Then give them all the lie."

when she was aware of footsteps passing along the adjoining lane, and little Romeo, creeping through the thick hedge, flung himself into her arms.

During her poetical quotations she had gathered even to satiety from the purple bank, and had returned to the hedge-row near the gate for the purpose of collecting the white violets which grew there in profusion; so that she was now nearly opposite the point where she had left Mrs. Kinlay, and was the unintentional auditress of a conversation which cleared at once the mystery that had hitherto hung over Mr. Carlton.

The first sentence that she heard rooted Hester to the spot. He seemed to have passed, or to have intended passing, and to have returned on some unexplained but uncontrollable impulse. His voice was at first low and calm—studiously calm, though not unkind, but became impassioned as he proceeded:

"Elizabeth! No, do not rise! Sit down again, I entreat you. You are not well enough to stand. You must have been very ill."

"I have been very ill."

"Ay, you are greatly altered. We are both greatly altered. You have suffered much?"

"Oh, very much!"

"Yes! we have both suffered! I am no man for general acquaintance, or for the slight and trivial companionship which this selfish, bustling world dignifies with the name of friendship. I lived, as you know, in my books, and in the one solitary tie which still connected me with the world. Fatherless and motherless, the only child of my only sister, you were to me, Elizabeth, as my own daughter—endeared to me by the cares of twenty years, by habit, by kindred, and by taste. And when you, whom I loved as a daughter, whom I trusted as a friend,—when you abandoned me for one so unworthy——"

"He is dead. I beseech you, spare his memory! He was kind to me—I loved him! For my sake, for your own, spare his memory! —You would not wish to see me die here before your eyes!"

"When for *him*, then—being such as he was—you deserted me, it seemed as if the earth were sinking under my feet, as if the sun were extinguished in the heavens; books ceased to interest me—my food did not nourish, my sleep did not refresh me—my blood was turned to gall; I vowed never to see, to pardon, or to succour you, (for well I knew that you would soon want succour,) whilst you remained with him, and acted under his guidance; and heartsick and miserable, I left the home in which we had been so happy, to wander over the world in search of the peace and oblivion which I failed to find: and then, under some strange and moody influence, I settled here, in the spot that I should most have avoided, to feed my spirit full with bitter recollections. Elizabeth, those tears and sobs seem to respond to my feelings. They seem to say, that on your part also the old and holy love of near kindred and long association is not quite forgotton?"

"Oh, never! never!"

"Why not then accede to my condition—my single condition, and return with me to the beautiful and deserted home of our common ancestors, its heiress and its mistress? Come with me, my dearest niece, and be, as you once were, my companion, my almoner, my friend! Come with me, as the comfort and solace of my old age, and find health and happiness in the abode of your youth! Why should you hesitate?"

"I do not hesitate."

"It is but to dismiss *his* daughter—the illegitimate offspring of a low and licentious

passion—one whom it was an insult to bring into contact with his pure and chaste wife!"

"One who is herself all that is pure and innocent, and gentle and good! I do not defend my own conduct. In abandoning you, my more than father, I deserved all punishment. Grievously as I have suffered, I have felt the chastisement to be merited. But if I were to desert this orphan child—*his* orphan—the grateful, tender child who has shared all my sorrows, has nursed me in sickness, has worked for me in health; if I were for any worldly good—even for that best of all blessings, your affection—to cast her friendless and helpless upon the world,—I should never know another quiet moment—I should sink under grief and remorse! What would become of her, growing as she is into such elegant, such exquisite beauty, and with a mind pure, graceful, and delicate as her person? What would be her fate? Her mother has long been dead. She has no kindred, no natural friend—none but myself, poor, feeble helpless, sick, and dying as I am; but, while I live, I will never abandon her—never! never! It breaks my heart now to part from you. But I cannot desert my Hester; as you have felt for me, so do I feel for her. Do not ask me to abandon the child of my love!"

"I ask nothing. I offer you the choice between her and me. I am rich, Elizabeth; my large estates have accumulated, during my long absence, until I can hardly count my own riches; and you are poor—grievously poor—think before you decide."

"I have decided. Poor I am—grievously poor; but in giving up your affection, I resign more than riches. I have decided—I have chosen—I do not hesitate. But say, Good-by! Bid God bless me! Do not leave me in unkindness. Speak to me before you go, or you will break my heart. Speak to me, if only one word!"

"Farewell, Elizabeth! May you be happier than I shall be!"

"Oh, God bless you! God for ever bless you, my best and earliest friend!"

And then Hester heard Mr. Carlton move slowly away—she felt rather than heard that he turned away; and Mrs. Kinlay remained weeping bitterly. Hester was glad to hear her sobs. She herself could not cry. Something rose in her throat, and she felt as if it would suffocate her—but she could not cry. She lay upon the ground lost in thought, with her little basket by her side, and Romeo still in her arms, until he sprang from her at his master's call, oversetting her violets in his haste: and then she roused herself, and rose from the bank on which she had been lying, picked up her scattered flowers, and walked with a strange calmness to the other end of the field, that if Mrs. Kinlay should seek her, she might not be led to suspect that she had overheard the conversation. And by the time Mrs. Kinlay did join her, each was sufficiently composed to conceal her misery from the other.

On the Friday of the ensuing week, a low and timid knock was heard just before sunset at the house of Mr. Carlton; and on opening the door, the housekeeper was at once astonished and perplexed to discover Hester, who inquired gently and firmly if she could see her master; and who, on his passage accidentally through the hall, settled the question herself, by advancing with a mixture of decision and modesty, and requesting to speak with him. Perplexed even more than his wondering housekeeper, he yet found it impossible to repulse the innocent child; and leading the way into the nearest room, he sat down on the first chair, and motioned for her to be seated also.

It happened that this room was the one in which Mrs. Kinlay had principally lived, and where Hester had passed the happiest days of her childhood. The windows opened on the pretty velvet lawn on which stood the great mulberry tree; and her own particular garden, the flower-bed that was called hers, and sowed and planted by her own hands under Mrs. Kinlay's direction, was right before her, glowing with the golden jonquil, and the crisp curled hyacinth—the choicest flowers of the season. There too, on that short turf where she had so often played with her own fond and faithful dog, lay the equally fond and faithful Romeo, basking in the last rays of the setting sun. The full tide of sad and tender recollection gushed upon her heart; the firmness which she had summoned for the occasion deserted her, her lip quivered, and she burst into tears.

Stern and misanthropic though he were, Mr. Carlton was not only a man, but a gentleman, by birth, education, and habit; and could not see female tears, especially in his own house, and caused, as he could not but suspect, by himself, without feeling more discomposed than he would have cared to acknowledge. He called immediately for water, for wine, for reviving essences, and himself administered a plentiful aspersion of *eau de Cologne*, and loosened the strings of her cottage bonnet.

Whilst so engaged, he could not help dwelling on her exquisite and delicate beauty. "How like a lily!" was the thought that passed through his mind as he gazed on the fair broad forehead, with its profusion of pale brown ringlets hanging down on either side; the soft dovelike eyes, the pencilled brows, and the long lashes from which the tears dropped on the polished cheeks; the fine carving of the youthful features, the classical grace of the swan-like neck, the pliant grace of the slender figure, the elegant moulding of those trembling hands with their long ivory fingers; and, above all, the mixture of sweetness and intelligence, of gentleness and purity, by which, even in her present desolation, the or-

phan girl was so eminently distinguished. She still wore mourning for Mr. Kinlay; and the colour of her dress, though of the simplest form and the commonest material, added to the resplendent fairness of her complexion:—"How like a lily! how elegant! how lady-like! how pure!" was the thought that clung to Mr. Carlton; and when, recovering her calmness by a strong effort, Hester raised her eyes to the person whom she feared most in the world, she met his fixed on her with a look of kindness which she did not think those stern features could have worn.

Her first words banished the unwonted softness, and recalled all the haughtiness of his common expression.

"I beg you to forgive me, sir, for having been so foolish as to cry and to occasion you this trouble. But I could not help it. This room brought to my mind so many past scenes of joy and sorrow, and so many friends that I shall never see again—dear, dear Mrs. Kinlay!—and my poor father! it seems but yesterday that he was sitting by the fireside just where you do now, with me upon his knee, talking so gaily and so kindly! And to think that he is dead, and how he died!"—And Hester turned away and wept without restraint.

She was aroused from her grief by the stern interrogatory of Mr. Carlton: "I understood that you desired to speak to me?"

"I did so, sir," was the reply; "but this strange foolishness!"—and for a moment Hester paused. She resumed, however, almost instantly; her sweet voice at first a little faltering, but acquiring strength as she proceeded in her story, which Mr. Carlton heard in attentive silence.

"I did take the liberty of asking to speak with you, sir, that I might confess to you, what perhaps you may think wrong, that being within hearing last Sunday of your conversation with Mrs. Kinlay, I remained an undetected listener to that which was certainly not meant by either party for my knowledge. I was on the other side of the hedge accidentally, gathering violets; and I suppose—I dare say—that I ought to have come into the lane. But I could not move; I was as if spell-bound to the place. What you said, and what she said, explained to me things which had puzzled me all my life long. Though taught to call him father,—and a kind father he was to me!—and her mother—such a mother as never poor girl was blest with!—I yet knew, I cannot tell how, that I was not their rightful child; I used to think that I was some poor orphan—such as indeed I am!—whom their kindness had adopted. But that which I really was, I never suspected,—far less that I had been the means of separating my benefactress from such a kinsman—such a friend! When I heard *that*, and remembered all her goodness and all her sufferings, I thought my very heart would have broken! She did not say a word to me, nor I to her. She does not know that I overheard the conversation; but all the evening she was so sad, and so ill—so very, very ill! Oh, if you could but have seen her pale face and have heard how she sighed! I could not bear it; so as soon as it was light I slipped out of the house, and ran up to the Dairy Farm to consult Giles Cousins and his dame, who have been very kind to me, and who would, I know, prevent my acting wrongly when I most wished to do right, as a young girl without the advice of her elders might do. They both agreed with me, that it was my plain duty to remove the cause of discord between two such near and dear relations by going to service; and happily, providentially, Mrs. Cousins's sister, who is cook in a clergyman's family, had written to her to look out for some young person to wait on her mistress's two little girls, walk out with them, and teach them to read and spell. Mrs. Cousins wrote immediately, and all is settled. Her husband—oh, how kind they have been!—her good generous husband has advanced the money wanting for the journey and some needful trifles, and won't hear of my paying him out of my wages:—but God will reward him!" pursued poor Hester, again bursting into grateful tears: "God only can reward such goodness! He is even going with me to the very house. I sleep to-night at the Dairy Farm, and we set off to-morrow morning;—Mrs. Kinlay, who knows nothing of my intentions, imagining only that I am going to assist Mrs. Cousins in some needlework. Oh, what a thing it was to see her for the last time, and not to dare to say farewell! or to ask her to bless me; or to pray for her on my bended knees, and bid God bless her for her goodness to the poor orphan. What a thing to part from such a friend for ever as if we were to meet to-morrow! But it is right, I am sure that it is right—my own internal feeling tells me so. And you must go to her before she misses me, and bring her home to your house; and in the full happiness of such a reconciliation, smaller sorrows will be lost. And you must tell her that I shall be very comfortable, very safe, for I am going to good people, with whom it will be my fault if I do wrong; and that in knowing her to be happy, I shall find happiness. Will you condescend, sir, to tell her this? and to pardon me for this intrusion? I could not steal away like a thief—I could not write, for I tried; and besides, there was only you that could comfort Mrs. Kinlay for the loss of one to whom she had been as kind as if she were her born daughter. Oh, sir, tell her, I beseech you, that the poor Hester is not ungrateful! If I leave her, it is from the truest and strongest affection," said poor Hester, unconsciously clasping her fair hands. "It is," added she, taking up a volume which lay open on the table, and which even

in her emotion and excitement had caught the eye of the verse-loving girl—"It is on the principle of these beautiful lines:

> 'I could not love thee, dear, so well,
> Loved I not honour more!'

Tell her this, I entreat of you! Tell her—"

"I shall not tell her a word of this, Hester," interrupted Mr. Carlton, taking her hand and drawing her kindly towards him,—"not a single word! But you must tell me one thing, must answer me one question:—You that seem to have a taste for the rough and the crabbed—a talent for softening the veriest churls,—do you think now in your little heart that you can ever like me half so well as Giles Cousins?"

"Oh, sir!" ejaculated Hester hopefully, yet doubtingly.

"Can you forgive me?" added Mr. Carlton more seriously; "can you pardon the foolish and wicked prejudice for which I can never forgive myself? I believe that you can, and that you will: and instead of setting off to this place of yours to-morrow morning, we must send your good friend Giles to make your excuses; and you must make my peace with Elizabeth, and we must all go together to Cranley Park. And here is Romeo knocking to be let in, and jumping and skipping as if he were conscious that his best friend was come home. I must give you Romeo, Hester; for he has given you the best part of him, that loving heart of his, long ago. And now, my dear little faithful girl, we must go to poor Elizabeth. To think of her having taught you to love the poetry of Richard Lovelace!"

Six weeks after this interview, Hester and Romeo, two of the happiest creatures in existence, were tripping gaily along a pathway which led from the fine mansion of Cranley Hall to a beautiful cottage at the edge of the picturesque and neatly-wooded park. It was the day famous for the ancient sports and customs of England—the lovely May-day; and the green earth and brilliant sky, the light air and the bright sunshine, were such as to realize the most enchanting description of the old poets. The young grass was studded with cowslips, and cuckoo-flowers, and the enamelled wild hyacinth; and the thickets no less richly set with the fragile wood-anemone, the elegant wood-sorrel, the brightly coloured wood-vetch, and the fragrant wood-roof. The bright green beeches with their grey and shining bark, and the rich brown foliage and rugged trunks of the oaks, set off the old magnificent thorns, whose long garlands of pearly blossoms scented the very air; huge horse-chestnuts, with their pyramidal flowers, were dispersed amongst the chase-like woodlands; and two or three wild cherries, of the size and growth of forest-trees, flung their snowy blossoms across the deep-blue sky. A magnificent piece of water, almost a lake, reflected the beautiful scenery by which it was surrounded,—the shores broken into woody capes and lawny bays, in which the dappled deer lay basking, listening, as it seemed, to the concert of nightingales, whose clear melody filled the air.

All spoke of affluence, of taste, of innocent enjoyment. To breathe that fragrant air, to gaze on that lovely landscape, was to Hester unmingled happiness. She bounded on gay as the pretty favourite who frolicked around her, her sweet face radiant with pleasure, and her melodious voice bursting into spontaneous quotations of the thousand exquisite verses which the spring-loving poets, from Chaucer to Milton, have consecrated to the merry month of May.

One chant of the season particularly haunted her, and *would* not go out of her head, although she repeated it over and over, purely to get rid of it,—the charming little poem from "The Paradise of Dainty Devices," of which this is the burthen:—

> "When May is gone, of all the year
> The pleasant time is past."

Now it was with this burthen that Hester quarrelled.

> "When May is gone, of all the year
> The pleasant time is past,"

quoth Hester.—"But that is a story, is it not, Romeo?" added she: "at least, I am sure it cannot be true at Cranley; for June will have roses and lilies, and strawberries, and hay-making," continued Hester. And then relapsing into her ditty,

> "May makes the cheerful hue—"

"I won't think of that pretty story-telling song,—shall I, Romeo? June will have roses and lilies; July will have jessamine and myrtle," said Hester. And then again the strain came across her—

> "May pricketh tender hearts,
> Their warbling notes to tune,
> Full strange it is——"

"There is nothing so strange as the way in which these lines haunt me," pursued poor Hester:—

> "When May is gone, of all the year
> The pleasant time is past."

"One would think," added she to herself, "that I was spell-bound, to go on repeating these verses, which, pretty as they are, have no truth in them; for at Cranley all times and all seasons, spring, summer, autumn, winter, must be pleasant. Oh, what a sweet place it is! and what happiness to live here with dear, dear Mrs. Kinlay, and dear Mr. Carlton! and to see her so well and cheerful, and him so considerate and kind!—so very kind! Oh, how can I ever be sufficiently thankful for such blessings!" thought Hester to herself, pausing and clasping her hands, while the tears ran gently down her fair cheeks in the

energy of her tender gratitude; and the May-day verses were effectually banished from her mind by the stronger impulse of affectionate feeling. "How can I ever be half thankful enough, or take half enough pains to please one who seems to have no wish so much at heart as that of pleasing me? Oh, how happy I am!—how thankful I ought to be!" thought Hester, again walking on towards the beautiful rustic building which she had now nearly reached; "the slightest wish cannot pass through my mind, but somehow or other Mr. Carlton finds it out, and it turns into reality—as if I had the slaves of the lamp at command, like Aladdin! This Dairy-house, now! I did but say how much I liked the old one at Belford, and here is one a thousand times prettier than that! But I shall not like this better, beautiful as it is,—no! nor so well," thought the grateful girl; "for here will be no Giles Cousins with his good wife to welcome me as they used to do there and contrive a hundred ways to cheat me into taking the gifts they could ill spare themselves. Dear Giles Cousins!—he, that was called so crabbed, and who was so generous, so delicate, so kind!—Dear, dear Giles Cousins! how glad he would be to see me so happy! I wonder what I can send him, dear old Giles! Oh, how I should like to see him!"

This train of thought had brought Hester to the rustic porch of the Dairy-house, which was, as she had said, an enlarged and improved copy of that at Belford, constructed with the magical speed which wealth (the true lamp of Aladdin) can command, to gratify a fancy which she had expressed on her first arrival at Cranley Park. Filled with grateful recollections of her good old friend, Hester reached the porch, and looking up to admire the excellent taste displayed in its construction, she saw before her—could she believe her eyes?—the very person of whom she had been thinking, Giles Cousins himself, with a smile of satisfaction softening his rugged countenance, his good wife peeping over his shoulder, and Mr. Carlton and Mrs. Kinlay in the background, delighted witnesses of the joyful meeting. He clasped her in his arms, and kissed her as he would have kissed the daughter whom he fancied she resembled; and then, seized with a sudden recollection of the difference of station, he begged pardon, and let her go.

"Oh, Master Cousins!" cried Hester, still retaining his hard rough fist, and pressing it between her delicate hands; "dear Master Cousins! how very, very glad I am to see you and your good dame! It was the only wish I had in the world. Oh, I shall be too happy! And you are come to stay?—I know you are come to stay!"

"To be sure I be, Miss," responded honest Giles: "come to stay till you be tired of me;—come for good."

"Oh, it is too much happiness!" exclaimed Hester. "How strange it is, that as soon as a wish passes through my mind, Mr. Carlton sees it, and makes it come to pass. Oh, I shall be too happy!" cried poor Hester, the tears chasing each other over cheeks glowing like maiden-roses; "I shall be too happy! and I never can be thankful enough! Was ever any one half so happy before?—did ever any one deserve such happiness!" exclaimed Hester, as, her tears flowing faster and faster, she flung herself into Mr. Carlton's arms.

Note.—That that beautiful race of dogs, the Italian greyhound, is susceptible of a personal partiality distinct from the common attachment of a dog to its master—a preference that may almost be called friendship, I have had a very pleasant and convincing proof in my own person. Several years ago I passed some weeks with a highly-valued friend, the wife of an eminent artist, in one of the large, old-fashioned houses in Newman-street—a house so much too large for their small family, that a part of it was let to another, and a very interesting couple, a young artist and his sister, just then rising into the high reputation which they have since so deservedly sustained. The two families lived with their separate establishments in this roomy and commodious mansion on the best possible terms of neighbourhood, but as completely apart as if they had resided in different houses; the only part which they shared in common being the spacious entrance-hall and the wide stone staircase: and on that staircase I had the happiness of forming an acquaintance, which soon ripened into intimacy, with a very beautiful Italian greyhound, belonging to the young painter and his sister.

I, who had from childhood the love of dogs, which is sometimes said to distinguish the future old maid, was enchanted with the playful and graceful creature, who bounded about the house with the elegance and sportiveness of a tame fawn, and omitted no opportunity of paying my court to the pretty and gentle little animal; whilst Romeo (for such was his name also) felt, with the remarkable instinct which dogs and children so often display, the truth of my professions, the reality and sincerity of my regard, and not only returned my caresses with interest, but showed a marked preference for my society; would waylay me in the hall, follow me up stairs and down, accompany me into my friend's drawing-room, steal after me to my own bedchamber, and, if called by his master and mistress, would try to entice me into their part of the domicile, and seem so glad to welcome me to their apartments, that it furnished an additional reason for my frequent visits to those accomplished young people.

In short, it was a regular flirtation; and when I went away, next to the dear and excellent friends whom I was leaving, I lamented the separation from Romeo. Although I had a pet dog at home, (when was I ever without one?) and that dog affectionate and beautiful, I yet missed the beautiful and affectionate Italian greyhound. And Romeo missed me. My friends wrote me word that he wandered up the house and down; visited all my usual haunts; peeped into every room where he had ever seen me; listened to every knock; and was for several days almost as uneasy as if he had lost his own fair mistress.

Two years passed before I again visited Newman-street: and then, crossing the hall in conversation with my kind hostess, just as I reached the bottom of the staircase I heard, first a cry of recognition, then a bounding step, and then, almost before I saw him, with the speed of lightning Romeo sprang down a whole flight of stairs, and threw himself on my bo-

som, trembling and quivering with delight, and nestling his delicate glossy head close to my cheek, as he had been accustomed to do during our former intercourse.

Poor, pretty Romeo! he must be dead long ago! But Mr. John Hayter may remember, perhaps, giving me a drawing of him, trailing a wreath of roses in front of an antique vase;—a drawing which would be valuable to any one, as it combines the fine taste of one of our most tasteful painters with the natural grace of his elegant favourite; but which, beautiful as it is, I value less as a work of art than as a most faithful and characteristic portrait of the gentle and loving creature, whom one must have had a heart of stone not to have loved after such a proof of affectionate recognition.

FLIRTATION EXTRAORDINARY.

There is a fashion in everything — more especially in everything feminine, as we luckless wearers of caps and petticoats are, of all other writers, bound to allow: the very faults of the ladies (if ladies can have faults), as well as the terms by which those faults are distinguished, change with the changing time. The severe but honest puritan of the Commonwealth was succeeded by the less rigid, but probably less sincere prude, who, from the Restoration to George the Third's day, seems, if we may believe those truest painters of manners, the satirists and the comic poets, to have divided the realm of beauty with the fantastic coquette—*L'Allegro* reigning over one half of the female world, *Il Penseroso* over the other.

With the decline of the artificial comedy, these two grand divisions amongst women, which had given such life to the acted drama, and had added humour to the prose of Addison and point to the verse of Pope, gradually died away. The Suspicious Husband of Dr. Hoadly, one of the wittiest and most graceful of those graceful and witty pictures of manners, which have now wholly disappeared from the comic scene, is, I think, nearly the last in which the characters are so distinguished. The wide-reaching appellations of prude and coquette,* the recognized title, the definite classification, the outward profession were gone, whatever might be the case with the internal propensities; and the sex, somewhat weary, it may be, of finding itself called by two names, neither of them very desirable, the one being very disagreeable and the other a little naughty, branched off into innumerable sects, with all manner of divisions and sub-divisions, and has contrived to exhibit during the last sixty or seventy years as great a variety of humours, good or bad, and to deserve and obtain as many epithets (most of them sufficiently ill-omened), as its various and capricious fellow-biped called man.

Amongst these epithets were two which I well remember to have heard applied some thirty years ago to more than one fair lady in the good town of Belford, but which have now passed away as completely as their disparaging predecessors, coquette and prude. The "words of fear" in question were "satirical" and "sentimental." With the first of these sad nicknames we have nothing to do. Child as I was, it seemed to me at the time, and I think so more strongly on recollection, that in two or three instances the imputation was wholly undeserved; that a girlish gaiety of heart on the one hand, and a womanly fineness of observation on the other, gave rise to an accusation which mixes a little, and a very little cleverness, with a great deal of ill-nature. But with the fair satirist, be the appellation true or false, we have no concern; our business is with one lady of the class sentimental, and with one, and one only, of those adventures to which ladies of that class are, to say the least, peculiarly liable.

Miss Selina Savage, (her detractors said that she was christened Sarah, founding upon certain testimony, of I know not what value, of aunts and godmothers; but I abide by her own signature, as now lying before me in a fine slender Italian hand, at the bottom of a note somewhat yellow by time, but still stamped in a French device of *pensés and soucis*, and still faintly smelling of ottar of roses; the object of the said note being to borrow "Mr. Pratt's exquisite poem of Sympathy,")—Miss Selina Savage (I hold by the autograph) was a young lady of uncertain age; there being on this point also a small variation of ten or a dozen years between her own assertions and those of her calumniators; but of a most sentimental aspect (in this respect all were agreed); tall, fair, pale, and slender, she being so little encumbered with flesh and blood, and so little tinted with the diversity of colouring thereunto belonging, — so completely blonde in hair, eyes, and complexion, that a very tolerable portrait of her might be cut out in white paper, provided the paper were thin enough, or drawn in chalks, white and black, upon a pale brown ground. Nothing could be too shadowy or too vapoury; the Castle Spectre, flourishing in all the glory of gauze drapery on the stage of Drury-Lane —the ghosts of Ossian made out of the mists of the hills—were but types of Miss Selina Savage. Her voice was like her aspect, — sighing, crying, dying; and her conversation as lachrymose as her voice: she sang sentimental songs, played sentimental airs, wrote sentimental letters, and read sentimental books; has given away her parrot for laughing, and turned off her foot-boy for whistling a country-dance.

* Perhaps flirt may be held to be no bad substitute. Yes! flirt and coquette may pass for synonymous. But under what class of women of this world shall we find the prude? The very species seems extinct.

The abode of this amiable damsel was a small neat dwelling, somewhat inconveniently situated, at the back of the Holy Brook, between the Abbey Mills on the one side, and a great timber-wharf on the other, with the stream running between the carriage-road and the house, and nothing to unite them but a narrow foot-bridge, which must needs be crossed in all weathers. It had, however, certain recommendations which more than atoned for these defects in the eyes of its romantic mistress: three middle-sized cypress-trees at one end of the court; in the front of her mansion two well-grown weeping-willows; an address to "Holy Brook Cottage," absolutely invaluable to such a correspondent, and standing in most advantageous contrast with the streets, terraces, crescents, and places of which Belford was for the most part composed; and a very fair chance of excellent material for the body of her letters by the abundant casualties and Humane Society cases afforded by the footbridge—no less than one old woman, three small children, and two drunken men having been ducked in the stream in the course of one winter. Drowning would have been too much of a good thing; but of that, from the shallowness of the water, there was happily no chance.

Miss Savage, with two quiet, orderly, light-footed, and soft-spoken maidens, had been for some years the solitary tenant of the pretty cottage by the Holy Brook. She had lost her father during her early childhood; and the death of her mother, a neat quiet old lady, whose interminable carpet-work is amongst the earliest of my recollections,—I could draw the pattern now,—and the absence of her brother, a married man with a large family and a prosperous business, who resided constantly in London,—left the fair Selina the entire mistress of her fortune, her actions, and her residence. That she remained in Belford, although exclaiming against the place and its society—its gossiping morning visits and its evening card-parties, as well as the general want of refinement amongst its inhabitants—might be imputed partly perhaps to habit, and an aversion to the trouble of moving, and partly to a violent friendship between herself and another damsel of the same class, a good deal younger and a great deal sillier, who lived two streets off, and whom she saw every day and wrote to every hour.

Martha, or, as her friend chose to call her, Matilda Marshall, was the fourth or fifth daughter of a spirit-merchant in the town. Frequent meetings at the circulating library introduced the fair ladies to each other, and a congeniality of taste brought about first an acquaintance, and then an intimacy, which difference of station (for Miss Savage was of the highest circle in this provincial society, and poor Martha was of no circle at all,) only seemed to cement the more firmly.

The Marshalls, flattered by Selina's notice of their daughter, and not sorry that that notice had fallen on the least useful and cheerful of the family—the one that amongst all their young people they could the most easily spare, put her time and her actions entirely into her own power, or rather into that of her patroness. Mr. Marshall, a calculating man of business, finding flirtation after flirtation go off without the conclusion matrimonial, and knowing the fortune to be considerable, began to look on Matilda as the probable heiress; and except from her youngest brother William, a clever but unlucky schoolboy, who delighted in plaguing his sister and laughing at sentimental friendships, this intimacy, from which all but one member was sedulously excluded, was cherished and promoted by the whole family.

Very necessary was Miss Matilda at the Holy Brook Cottage. She filled there the important parts of listener, adviser, and confidant; and filled them with an honest and simple-hearted sincerity which the most skilful flatterer that ever lived would have failed to imitate. She read the same books, sang the same songs, talked in the same tone, walked with the same air, and wore the same fashions; which upon her, she being naturally short and stout, and dark-eyed and rosy, had, as her brother William told her, about the same effect that armour similar to Don Quixote's would have produced upon Sancho Panza.

One of her chief services in the character of confidant was of course to listen to the several love passages of which, since she was of the age of Juliet, her friend's history might be said to have consisted. How she had remained so long unmarried might have moved some wonder, since she seemed always immersed in the passion which leads to such a conclusion: but then her love was something like the stream that flowed before her door—a shallow brooklet, easy to slip into, and easy to slip out of. From two or three imprudent engagements her brother had extricated her; and from one, the most dangerous of all, she had been saved by her betrothed having been claimed the week before the nuptials by another wife. At the moment of which we write, however, the fair Selina seemed once more in a fair way to change her name.

That she was fond of literature of a certain class, we have already intimated; and, next after Sterne and Rousseau, the classics of her order, and their horde of vile imitators, whether sentimental novelists, or sentimental essayists, or sentimental dramatists, she delighted in the horde of nameless versifiers whom Gifford demolished; in other words, after bad prose her next favourite reading was bad verse; and as this sort of verse is quite as easy to write as to read—I should think of the two rather easier—she soon became no inconsider-

able perpetrator of sonnets without rhyme, and songs without reason; and elegies, by an ingenious combination, equally deficient in both.

After writing this sort of verse, the next step is to put it in print; and in those days, (we speak of above thirty years ago,) when there was no Mrs. Hemans to send grace and beauty, and purity of thought and feeling, into every corner of the kingdom—no Mary Howitt to add the strength and originality of a manly mind to the charm of a womanly fancy—in those days the Poet's Corner of a country newspaper was the refuge of every poetaster in the country. So intolerably bad were the acrostics, the rebuses, the epigrams, and the epitaphs which adorned those asylums for fugitive pieces, that a selection of the worst of them would really be worth printing amongst the Curiosities of Literature. A less vain person than Miss Selina Savage might have thought she did the H——shire Courant honour in sending them an elegy on the death of a favourite bullfinch, with the signature 'Eugenia.'

It was printed forthwith, read with ecstatic admiration by the authoress and her friend, and with great amusement by William Marshall, who, now the spruce clerk of a spruce attorney, continued to divert himself with worming out of his simple sister all the secrets of herself and her friend, and was then unfair enough to persecute the poor girl with the most unmerciful ridicule. The elegy was printed, and in a fair way of being forgotten by all but the writer, when in the next number of the Courant appeared a complimentary sonnet addressed to the authoress of the elegy, and signed "Orlando."

Imagine the delight of the fair Eugenia! She was not in the least astonished,—a bad and inexperienced writer never is taken by surprise by any quantity of praise; but she was charmed and interested as much as woman could be. She answered his sonnet by another, which, by the by, contained, contrary to Boileau's well-known recipe, and the practice of all nations, a quatrain too many. He replied to her rejoinder; compliments flew thicker and faster; and the poetical correspondence between Orlando and Eugenia became so tender, that the editor of the H——shire Courant thought it only right to hint to the gentleman that the post-office would be a more convenient medium for his future communications.

As this intimation was accompanied by the address of the lady, it was taken in very good part; and before the publication of the next number of the provincial weekly journal, Miss Savage received the accustomed tribute of verse from Orlando, enveloped in a prose epistle, dated from a small town about thirty miles off, and signed 'Henry Turner."

An answer had been earnestly requested, and an answer the lady sent; and by return of post she received a reply, to which she replied with equal alertness; then came a love-letter in full form, and then a petition for an interview; and to the first the lady answered anything but No! and to the latter she assented.

The time fixed for this important visit, it being now the merry month of May, was three o'clock in the day. He had requested to find her alone; and accordingly by one P. M., she had dismissed her faithful confidant, promising to write to her the moment Mr. Turner was gone—had given orders to admit no one but a young gentleman who sent in his visiting ticket, (such being the plan proposed by the inamorato,) and began to set herself and her apartment in order for his reception; she herself in an elegant dishabille, between sentimental and pastoral, and her room in a confusion equally elegant, of music, books, and flowers; Zimmerman and Lavater on the table; and one of those dramas—those *tragédies bourgeoises*, or *comédies larmoyantes*, which it seems incredible that Beaumarchais, he that wrote the two matchless plays of Figaro,* could have written—in her hand.

It was hardly two o'clock, full an hour before his time, when a double knock was heard at the door; Mr. Turner's card was sent in, and a well-dressed and well-looking young man ushered into the presence of the fair poetess. There is no describing such an interview. My readers must imagine the compliments and the blushes, the fine speeches *de part et d'autre*, the long words and the fine words, the sighings and the languishments. The lady was satisfied; the gentleman had no reason to complain; and after a short visit he left her, promising to return in the evening to take his coffee with herself and her friend.

She had just sat down to express to that friend in her accustomed high-flown language, the contentment of her heart, when another knock was followed by a second visiting ticket. "Mr. Turner again! Oh! I suppose he has remembered something of consequence. Show him in."

And in came a *second* and a different Mr. Turner!!

The consternation of the lady was inexpressible! That of the gentleman, when the reason of her astonishment was explained to him, was equally vehement and flattering. He burst into eloquent threats against the impostor who had assumed his name, the wretch who had dared to trifle with such a passion,

* I speak, of course, of the admirably brilliant French comedies, and not of the operas, whether English or Italian, which, retaining the situations, and hardly the situations, have completely sacrificed the wit, the character, and the pleasantry of the delightful originals, and have almost as much tended to injure Beaumarchais's reputation as his own dullest dramas.

and such a ladye-love; and being equally well-looking and fine-spoken, full of rapturous vows and ardent protestations, and praise addressed equally to the woman and authoress, conveyed to the enchanted Selina the complete idea of her lover-poet.

He took leave of her at the end of half an hour, to ascertain, if possible, the delinquent who had usurped his name and his assignation, purposing to return in the evening to meet her friend; and again she was sitting down to her writing-table, to exclaim over this extraordinary adventure, and to dilate on the charms of the true Orlando, when three o'clock struck, and a third knock at the door heralded a third visiting ticket, and a *third* Mr. Turner! ! !

A shy, awkward, simple youth was this,—"the real Simon Pure!"—bowing and bashful, and with a stutter that would have rendered his words unintelligible even if time had been allowed him to bring them forth. But no time was allowed him. Provoked past her patience, believing herself the laughing-stock of the town, our sentimental fair one forgot her refinement, her delicacy, her fine speaking, and her affectation; and calling her maids and her footboy to aid, drove out her unfortunate suitor with such a storm of vituperation — such a torrent of plain, honest, homely scolding — that the luckless Orlando took to his heels, and missing his footing on the narrow bridge, tumbled head-foremost into the Holy Brook, and emerged dripping like a river god, to the infinite amusement of the two impostors, and of William Marshall, the contriver of the jest, who lay *perdu* in the mill, and told the story, as a great secret, to so many persons, that before the next day it was known half over the place, and was the eventual cause of depriving the good town of Belford of one of the most inoffensive and most sentimental of its inhabitants. The fair Selina decamped in a week.

Note. — Whilst correcting the proof-sheet of this paper, (January 18th, 1835,) I see with some amusement, in that admirable literary Journal the Athenæum, an old French anecdote which bears considerable resemblance to the adventure of poor Miss Savage. How the coincidence can have occurred I have no means of divining; — unless, indeed, our wicked friend Mr. William Marshall may have happened to meet with the story of "Les trois Racans."

BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM, No. III.

THE SILVER ARROW.

Amongst the most recent of our country beauties, were a pair of fair young friends, whose mutual attachment, in the best sense of the word romantic—that is to say, fervent, uncalculating, unworldly—was smiled at by one part of our little world, and praised and admired by another; but, in consideration, perhaps, of the youth and the many attractions of the parties, pretty indulgently looked upon by all. Never was a closer intimacy. They rode together, walked together, read together, sang together, sat in the same pew at church, and danced in the same quadrille at the assembly. Not a day passed without some proof of affection *de part et d'autre;* and at the last target-day at Oakley——But I must not forestall my story.

Archery meetings are the order of the day. We all know that in the days of yore the bow was the general weapon of the land; that the battles of Cressy and of Poictiers were won by the stout English archers, and the king's deer slain in his forests by the bold outlaws Robin Hood and Little John, and the mad priest Friar Tuck; that battles were won and ships taken, not by dint of rockets and cannon-balls, but by the broad arrow; and that (to return to more domestic, and therefore more interesting illustrations) William of Cloudesley, the English William Tell,* saved his forfeited life by shooting an apple from his son's head, at six-score paces.† But not to revert to those times, which were perhaps rather too much in earnest, when the dinner, or the battle, or the life, depended on the truth of the aim; and the weapon (to say nothing of the distance) would be as unmanageable to a modern warrior as the bow of Ulysses;—not to go back to that golden age of archery and minstrelsy, never since the days of James and Elizabeth, when the bow, although no longer the favourite weapon, continued to be the favourite pastime of the middle classes,‡

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* Alas! that this pretty story should, both in the Swiss and the English version be apocryphal! But so I fear it is. Saxo Grammaticus hath the legend with a still earlier date, and a still more northern locality. In short, it is probably one of those stories current in the annals of many nations, and true in none—one of the illusions of history which form such fine subjects for the dramatic poet.

† 120 yards. He had previously cleft a willow wand at 400 yards. Vide the fine ballad of "Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and William of Cloudesley," in Bishop Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," a collection which, in these days of Robin Hoods and Maid Marians ought to be reprinted, if only for the sake of the archery lore.

‡ If the fact were not too well known to need confirmation, abundant proof of the love of shooting at the butts, so prevalent amongst our ancestors, might be found in the plays of Shakspeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and the other great dramatists of that great dramatic age. Their works abound with allusions to the subject, and images derived from the sport. Even falconry, rich as that is in technical terms, has hardly furnished them with so many illustrations. It seems to have been the holiday pastime of the lower classes, and, in the absence of clubs and newspapers, the almost daily recreation of the middling order of the gentry; and probably continued to be so up to the time of the Commonwealth, when all amusements were suspended by the stern habits of the Puritans

have bows and arrows been so rife in this England of ours, as at the present time. Every country mansion has its butts and its targets, every young lady her quiver; and that token of honour, the prize-arrow, trumpery as, sooth to say, it generally is, is as much coveted and cherished and envied, as if, instead of a toy for a pedlar's basket, it were a diamond necklace, or an emerald bracelet.

To confess the truth, I suspect the whole affair is rather more of a plaything now-a-days than it was even in the later time to which we have alluded; partly, perhaps, because the ladies, with the solitary exception of Maid Marian, (who, however, in Ben Jonson's beautiful fragment, "The Sad Shepherd," of which she is the heroine, is *not* represented as herself taking part in the sylvan exercises of her followers,) contented themselves with witnessing, instead of rivalling, the feats of our forefathers; partly it may be, because, as I have before observed, the thews and sinews of our modern archers, let them call themselves Toxophilites* fifty times over, would tug with very little effect at the weapons of Clym of the Clough, or of Little John, so called because he was the biggest person of his day. Or even if a fine gentleman of the age of William the Fourth should arrive at bending a 200 pound bow, think of his cleaving a willow wand at 400 yards' distance! Modern limbs cannot compass such feats. He might as well try to lift the Durham ox.

Nevertheless, although rather too much of a toy for boys and girls, and wanting altogether in the variety and interest of that great national out-door amusement called cricket, it would be difficult to find a better excuse for drawing people together in a country neighbourhood; an object always desirable, and particularly so in this little midland county of ours, where, between party squabbles and election squabbles, (affairs of mere personal prejudice, with which politics have often nothing to do,) half the gentry live in a state of non-intercourse and consequent ignorance of each other's real good qualities, and of the genial, pardonable, diverting foibles, which perhaps conduce as much as more grave, solid excellence, not only to the amusement of society, but to our mutual liking and regard for each other. A man perfect in thought and word and deed is a fine thing to contemplate at reverent distance, like some rare statue on its pedestal; but for the people who are destined to mix with their fellows in this work-a-day world—to walk and talk, and eat and drink like their neighbours,—the greater store of harmless peculiarities and innocent follies they bring to keep our follies in countenance, the better for them and for ourselves. Luckily there is no lack of these congenial elements in human nature. The only thing requisite is a scene for their display.

This want seemed completely supplied by the Archery Meeting; an approved neutral ground, where politics could not enter, and where the Capulets and Montagues of H—— shire might contemplate each other's good qualities, and be conciliated by each other's defects, without the slightest compromise of party etiquette or party dignity. The heads of the contending houses had long ago agreed to differ, like the chiefs of rival factions in London, and met and visited, except just at an election time, with as much good-humour and cordiality as Lady Grey meets and visits Lady Beresford; it was amongst the partisans, the adherents of the several candidates, that the prejudice had been found so inveterate; and every rational person, except those who were themselves infected with the prevalent moral disorder, hailed the prescription of so pleasant a remedy for the county complaint.

Accordingly, the proposal was no sooner made at a country dinner-party than it was carried by acclamation; a committee was appointed, a secretary chosen, and the pleasant business of projecting and anticipating commenced upon the spot. For the next week, nothing could be heard of but the Archery Meeting; bows and arrows were your only subject, and Lincoln-green your only wear.

Then came a few gentle difficulties; difficulties that seem as necessary preludes to a party of pleasure as the winds and rains of April are to the flowers of May. The committee, composed, as was decorous, not of the eager sons and zealous daughters and bustling mammas of the principal families, but of their cool, busy, indifferent papas, could by no chance be got together; they were hay-making, or they were justicing, or they were attending the House, or they had forgotten the day, or they had not received the letter; so that, in spite of all the efforts of the most active of secretaries, on Monday four only assembled out of twenty, on Tuesday two and on Wednesday none at all.

Then of the three empty houses in the neighbourhood, on either of which they had reckoned so confidently, that they had actually talked over their demerits after the manner of bidders at an auction who intended to buy, the one was point-blank refused to Mr. Secretary's courteous application, on the ground of the mischievousness of the parties, the danger of their picking the flowers, and the certainty of their trampling the grass; the second, after having been twenty years on sale, suddenly found a purchaser just as it was wanted for the Archery Club; and the third, which had been for years thirty and odd snugly going to ruin under the provident care of the Court of

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and the stirring interests of the civil wars. After the Restoration, the bowling-green appears to have taken the place of the archery-ground.

* A word from the Greek, signifying, I believe, "a bow-man," "a lover of the bow."

Chancery—a case of disputed title,—and of which it had been proposed to take temporary possession as a sort of "no man's land," found itself most unexpectedly adjudged to a legal owner by the astounding activity of my Lord Brougham. The club was at its wit's end, and likely to come to a dissolution before it was formed, (if an English-woman may be permitted to speak good Irish,) when luckily a neighbouring M. P., a most kind and genial person, whose fine old mansion was neither on sale nor in Chancery, and who patriotically sacrificed his grass and his flowers for the public good, offered his beautiful place, and furnished the Oakley Park Archery Club, not only with "a local habitation," but "a name."

Then came the grand difficulty of all, the selection of members. Every body knows that in London the question of caste or station —or, to use perhaps a better word, of gentility—is very easily settled, or rather it settles itself without fuss or trouble. In the great city, there is room for every body. No one is so high or so low as to be without his equals; and, in the immense number of circles into which society is divided, he falls insensibly into that class to which his rank, his fortune, his habits, and his inclinations are best adapted. In the distant provinces, on the other hand, the division is equally easy, from a reverse reason. There, the inhabitants may almost be comprised in the peasantry, the yeomanry, the clergy, and the old nobility and gentry, the few and distant lords of the soil living in their own ancestral mansions, and mixing almost exclusively with each other, not from airs, but from an absolute thinness of population amongst the educated or cultivated classes. But in these small midland counties close to London, where the great estates have changed masters so often that only two or three descendants of the original proprietors are to be found in a circuit of twenty miles, and where even the estates themselves are broken into small fractions — counties where you cannot travel a quarter of a mile without bursting on some line of new paling enclosing a belt of equally new plantation, and giving token of a roomy, commodious, square dwelling, red or white, as may suit the taste of the proprietor, or some "cot of spruce gentility," verandahed and beporched according to the latest fashion, very low, very pretty, and very inconvenient—in these populous country villages, where persons of undoubted fortune but uncertain station are as plenty as blackberries, it requires no ordinary tact in a provincial lord-chamberlain to grant or to refuse the privilege of the *entrée*.

Perhaps the very finest definitions of a gentleman in our own, or in any other language, may be found in Mr. Ward's "De Vere,"* and in the motto of (I think) the Rutland family, "Manners make the man;" but our country practice seems rather to be grounded on the inimitable answer of the ineffable Mr. Dubster in Madame D'Arblay's "Camilla," who, on being asked what made a gentleman? gravely replied, "Leaving off business;" or on the still nicer distinction, so admirably ridiculed by another great female writer (Miss Austen, in "Emma,") where a Mr. Suckling, a Bristol merchant, who had retired from trade some eight or nine years back, refuses to visit another Bristolian who had purified himself from the dregs of the sugar-warehouse only the Christmas before.

Now Mr. Dubster's definition, besides being sufficiently liberal and comprehensive, had the great merit of being clear and practicable; and our good-humoured secretary, a man of ten thousand, well-born, well-bred, well-fortuned, and thoroughly well-conditioned, — a man light, buoyant and bounding, as full of activity as his favourite blood-horse, and equally full of kindness, — would willingly have abided by his rule, and was by no means disinclined to extend his invitations to the many educated, cultivated, rich, and liberal persons, whose fathers were still guilty of travelling to London once a week to superintend some old respectable concern in Austin Friars, or St. Mary Axe, or even to visit Lloyd's or the Stock Exchange. But unluckily the Mr. Sucklings of the neighbourhood prevailed. "Standing" (to borrow an expressive Americanism) carried the day, and Mr. Brown, whose mother eighteen years ago had purchased the Lawn on one side of Headingly Heath,† had not only the happiness of excluding his neighbour Mr. Green, who had been settled at the Grove only a twelve-month, but even of barring out his still nearer neighbour Mr. White, who had been established in the Manor House these half-dozen years.

* "By a gentleman, we mean not to draw a line that would be invidious between high and low, rank and subordination, riches and poverty. The distinction is in the mind. Whoever is open, loyal, and true; whoever is of humane and affable demeanour; whoever is honourable in himself, and candid in his judgment of others, and requires no law but his word to make him fulfil an engagement; such a man is a gentleman, and such a man may be found among the tillers of the earth. But high birth and distinction for the most part insure the high sentiment which is denied to poverty and the lower professions. It is hence, and hence only, that the great claim their superiority; and hence, what has been so beautifully said of honour, the law of kings, is no more than true:

"It aids and strengthens Virtue when it meets her,
And imitates her actions where she is not."

De Vere, vol. ii., p. 22.

† It may convey some notion of the villa population in our county, to say that from the centre of Headingly Heath we can see eight gentlemen's houses. A young sportsman, who wanted a shooting-box in a retired situation, being taken in by a puffing advertisement of one of these mansions, drove down to look at it; but, when he came within view of the surrounding villas, turned round his phaeton, and trotted off without alighting, exclaiming, "Clapham Common, by Jove!"

Such, at least, was the decree passed in full committee; but it is the common and rightful fate of over-rigorous laws to be softened in practice; and, Mr. White being a most agreeable, hospitable man, with a very pleasant clever wife, and the Misses Green ranking amongst the prettiest girls in the neighbourhood, somehow or other they eventually got admittance.

These greater difficulties being fairly surmounted at the cost of a few affronts on the part of the forgotten, and many murmurs on the part of the omitted, then followed a train of minor troubles about dinners and crockery, targets and uniforms, regulations and rules. Drawing up the code of archery laws, although it seems no mighty effort of legislation, cost our committee almost as much labour as might have gone to the concoction of a second Code Napoleon, or another Bill for Local Courts; and the equipment of half the regiments in the service would have consumed less time and thought than were wasted on the male and female costumes of the Oakley Park Archery Club. Twelve several dolls were dressed in white and green of various patterns by the committee-men and their wives; and such a feud ensued between Mr. Giles, haberdasher, in King Street, in our dear town of Belford, and Miss Fenton, milliner, in the Market Place, each maintaining his and her separate and very various version of the appointed regulation doll, that nothing but the female privilege of scolding without fighting prevented that most serious breach of the peace called a duel. It has been hinted that the unfortunate third party (that is to say, the doll) was a sufferer in the fray, the flowers being torn from her bonnet, the bows from her petticoat, and the pelerine from her bosom. For this I do not vouch; but for the exceeding ugliness of the selected regimentals, whether male or female, I can most conscientiously answer. It required some ingenuity to invent anything so thoroughly hideous. The young ladies, in clear muslin and green ribands, arranged as they thought fit, looked like pretty little shepherdesses; but their unfortunate mammas, dressed by Mr. Giles, or Miss Fenton, according to the pattern of the demolished doll, in gowns of white chaly, barred like a hussar jacket, with dull and dismal green, had, from the dim colour of the woollen material, more the air of a flock of sheep or a bevy of Carmelite nuns, or a troop of shrouded corpses escaped from their coffins, or a set of statues like that of the commandant in Don Giovanni, when seen from behind, or of the figure of Orcus (the classical Death), as represented in the Alcestis, when viewed frontwise—than of a group of middle-aged English ladies, equipped for a party of pleasure.

In spite, however, of jostling interests and conflicting vanities, the day of the archery meeting was anticipated with great and general delight by the young people in H——shire; nor were their expectations disappointed. For once in a way, the full fruition of enjoyment outran the vivid pleasures of hope. Even as a measure of conciliation, the experiment succeeded infinitely better than such experiments generally do succeed. The diverse factions, Neri and Bianchi, Montecchi, and Capuletti, met at the target-side, looked each other in the face, bowed and curtsied, smiled and laughed, talked sober sense and agreeable nonsense, according to their several inclinations and capacities, and became, by the insensible influence of juxtaposition, the mere habit of meeting and speaking, almost as good friends as if such a thing as a contested election never had happened, and never could happen again:—a happy state of feeling, to which I can only say, *Esto perpetua!*

All went well at Oakley. The dinners were excellent and abundant, and the appetites of the diners so manageable and complaisant, that, although of the class whose usual dinner-hour varies from six to eight, they actually contrived to eat their principal meal at three, without showing the slightest symptom of its arriving before it was wanted. The music was also good, and the dancers untirable; and although a dose of pleasuring, a course of shooting, walking, eating, talking, and dancing, which beginning at one o'clock post meridian, lasted to rather more than the same hour the next morning, rivalling in fatigue and duration the excursion of a maid-servant to a country fair, might naturally be expected to produce all sorts of complaints amongst our delicate young ladies, I did not hear of a single case of illness arising from the archery meeting. So omnipotent, in the female constitution, is will.

I myself found an unexpected gratification, or rather an unexpected relief, at the end of the first two meetings. I had taken a sort of personal aversion to the female regimentals, the regulation dress of the ladies. The thing affected my nerves; I could not abide the sight of it. But "there is some soul of goodness in things evil." The odious chaly was found to have one capital point:—it wears out sooner than any material under the sun, and, difficult to make, takes care very speedily to unmake itself by fraying in every direction; so that, rent and ragged, tattered and torn, the hideous ladies' uniform was, at the third meeting, pretty uniformly cast aside, and female taste again resumed its proper influence over the female toilet.

So far so good. But, when we English people take a fancy in our heads, we are apt to let it run away with us; we hoist all sail, and cast the ballast overboard. And so it happened in the present instance. After the first two or three meetings, all the genteel population of H——shire, men, women, and children, went archery mad—a lunacy pre-

served for these particular dog-days. You should not see a lawn of gentility without the targets up, or an entrance-hall without bows leaning against each corner, and arrows scattered over every chair. All other amusements were relinquished. Dinner-parties were at an end; pic-nics were no more. Nothing would go down but private bow-meetings and public target-days. Dancing, heretofore the delight of a country beauty, was only tolerated after the archery, because people could not well shoot by candle-light; and, as the autumn drew on, even that other branch of shooting, in which our young sportsmen used to take such pleasure, entirely lost its charm. Guns were out of fashion. The ecstatic first of September became a common day; and to me, who had watched the prevailing mania with some amusement, it appeared likely that, unless the birds should make up their minds to be killed by bows and arrows, (as Locksley brought down the wild goose,) a process which I did not think it probable that they would consent to, the partridges hereabout might have a fair chance of living on till the next season.

Archery was the universal subject. Archery songs stood open on the piano. Archery engravings covered the print-table. The "Archer's Guide" was the only book worth opening, and bows and arrows the only topic fit to discuss. Political economy was no longer heard in the drawing-room, or the East India question in the dining-parlour; Don Carlos and Don Miguel had been "pretty fellows in their day," but their reign was over. What was a great speech in the House to the glory of placing three arrows in the target? or a great victory to a shot in the gold?* Time was no longer computed by the calendar; almanacks were out of fashion. The whole country-side dated from the Oakley target-day, as the Greeks from the Olympic Games.

The little boys and girls, at home for the holidays, caught the enthusiasm. Bats and balls, and dolls and battledores, were all cast aside as worthless trumpery: toys, in any other than the prevailing shape, were an affront.

From the manly Etonian, preferring a bow to a boat, to his six year old sister taking her fairy quiver to bed with her, the whole rising generation enrolled themselves in the archery band—a supplementary auxiliary legion. They added an enclosure called "the Butts" to their baby-houses, and equipped their dolls with bows and arrows.†

Trade, as usual, made its advantages of the ruling passion. The bow business became a distinct branch of commerce; yew-trees rose in the market; and our good town of Belford was enlivened by no less than three dashing "archery ware-houses," and a new coach called the Dart. Jewellers' shops glittered with emblematic trinkets; Cupids fluttered on our seals and our breakfast-cups; and the example of a certain Mr. Dod, a member of the Roxburghe Club, who is recorded to have been particularly mad on the subject "of Robinhood and Archery songs," was, as I have said before, followed by all H——shire.

The casualties which occurred in the pursuit of the exercise (as accidents will happen in the best-regulated families) were quite ineffectual in damping the zeal of the professors, male and female. One bonnet has been struck through the crown, and a bunch of flowers in another fairly beheaded; several fingers (of gloves) have been knocked off; and one thumb of flesh and blood slightly lacerated. One gentleman was shot through the skirts, and two young ladies who were walking arm in arm were pinned together by the sleeve; whilst one fair archeress wounded another in the foot—the fate of Philoctetes, though not with the arrows of Hercules.

These calamities notwithstanding, the Oakley Park Archery meetings continued as prosperous as if they had not been puffed in the county newspapers. The weather had been very fine for English weather in the months of June, July, and August,—that is to say, on the first meeting it had been a hurricane, which had blown down trees and chimneys; on the second it had been rather wet and intolerably cold, so that they were fain to have fires; and on the third so insufferably hot, that the spectators sat fanning themselves under the deep shadow of the great oak-trees. But what are these evils to a real genuine enthusiasm?—drops of water that make the fire burn brighter:—oil upon the flame. On the whole, the experiment has succeeded to a miracle. The members had the pleasure of being crowded at dinner and in the ball-room,—almost as much crowded as at a Quarter Sessions' dinner, or a London route;—just the sort of grievance which papas and mammas like to grumble at. And the sons and daughters found amusement in a different line;—for

* This is certainly a modern innovation. To place the arrow in the *white* was the constant aim of the old archers, as any one conversant with old poetry could prove by scores of quotations from Massinger and his contemporaries.

† And in so doing, poor dears, they did but reclaim the play-things which their elders had borrowed from them. What saith that great authority, Mr. Thomas Hood, in the admirable account of a schoolboy's life, called "A Retrospective Review," one of the best of that great punster's many good things? Doth he not talk of bows and arrows as the toys of his childhood? Read, and mark, and observe too, the company into which he puts his boyish archery.

"My football's laid upon the shelf,
I am a shuttlecock myself
The world knocks to and fro.—
My archery is all unlearn'd,
And grief against myself has turn'd
My arrows and my bow."

the archery-ground proved a capital flirting place, and hearts were pierced there in reality, as well as in metaphor. For the rest, arrows were lost,* and prizes won, and dinners eaten, and toasts drunk, and speeches made, and dances danced; and all the world at Oakley was merry, if not wise.

So passed the first three meetings. The fourth, at the very end of August, was anticipated with growing and still increasing delight by the members of the Club, whose incessant practice had much sharpened their desire of exhibition and competition; and to none was it more an object of delighted expectation than to Frances Vernon, a shy and timid girl who generally shrank from public amusements, but who looked forward to this with a quite different feeling, since she was to be accompanied thither by her only brother Horace, a young man of considerable talents and acquirements, who, after spending several years abroad, had just returned to take possession of his paternal mansion in the neighbourhood of Oakley.

Horace and Frances Vernon were the only children of a very gallant officer of high family and moderate fortune, who had during his lifetime been one of the most zealous followers of the two factions (the English Montecchi and Capuletti) who divided H——shire, and had bequeathed to his son as abundant a legacy of prejudices and feuds as would have done honour to a border chieftain of the fifteenth century. The good general's prime aversion, his pet hatred, had of course fallen upon his nearest opponent, his next neighbour, who besides the sin of espousing one interest in H——shire, as the general espoused another —of being an uncompromising whig, (radical his opponent was fain to call him,) as the general was a determined tory—had committed the unpardonable crime of making his own large fortune as a Russia merchant; and, not content with purchasing a considerable estate, which the general, to clear off old mortgages, had found it convenient to sell, had erected a huge staring red house within sight of the Hall windows, where he kept twice as many horses, carriages, and servants, and saw at least three times as much company as his aristocratic neighbour. If ever one good sort of man hated another, (for they were both excellent persons in their way,) General Vernon hated John Page.

John Page, on his side, who scorned to be outdone in an honest English aversion by any tory in Christendom, detested the general with equal cordiality; and a warfare of the most inveterate animosity ensued between them at all places where it was possible that disputes should be introduced, at vestries and county meetings, at quarter-sessions, and at the weekly bench. In these skirmishes the general had much the best of the battle. Not only was his party more powerful and influential, but his hatred, being of the cold, courtly, provoking sort that never comes to words, gave him much advantage over an adversary hot, angry, and petulant, whose friends had great difficulty in restraining him within the permitted bounds of civil disputation. An ordinary champion would have been driven from the field by such a succession of defeats; but our reformer (so he delighted to style himself) had qualities, good and bad, which prevented his yielding an inch. He was game to the backbone. Let him be beaten on a question fifty times, and he would advance to the combat the fifty-first as stoutly as ever. He was a disputant whom there was no tiring down.

John Page was of a character not uncommon in his class in this age and country. Acute and shrewd on many subjects, he was yet on some favourite topics prejudiced, obstinate, opinionated, and conceited, as your self-educated man is often apt to be: add to this that he was irritable, impetuous and violent, and we have all the elements of a good hater. On the other hand, he was a liberal master, a hospitable neighbour, a warm and generous friend, a kind brother, an affectionate husband, and a doting father: note, beside, that he was a square-made little man, with a bluff but good-humoured countenance, a bald head, an eagle eye, a loud voice, and a frank and unpolished but by no means vulgar manner, and the courteous reader will have a pretty correct idea of Mr. John Page.

Whether he or his aristocratic adversary would finally have gained the mastery at the bench and in the vestry, time only could have shown. Death stepped in and decided the question. The general, a spare, pale, temperate man, to whom such a disease seemed impossible, was carried off by apoplexy; leaving a sickly gentle-tempered widow and two children; a son of high promise, who had just left College, and set out on a long tour through half of Europe and much of Asia; and one daughter, a delicate girl of fourteen, whom her mother, in consideration of her own low spirits and declining health, sent immediately to school.

Six years had elapsed between the general's death and the date of my little story, when Horace Vernon, returning home to his affec-

* It has often been a puzzle what becomes of the innumerable pins that are scattered over the wide world; but it is much more difficult to guess the fate of the lost arrows, and it is really astounding how many are lost. The gentlemen's shafts are often, probably, lodged in the tree-tops, but those of the ladies are not likely to fly so far or so high, and generally, it is to be presumed, drop to the ground, and (to use the technical phrase) go *snaking* about in the grass; and the fair proprietors wander poring about in search of them with admirable perseverance, but very indifferent success. Nobody that has not had experience of the fact would believe that so large an object should be so frequently and so completely undiscoverable.

tionate relations, embrowned by long travel, but manly, graceful, spirited, and intelligent, even beyond their expectations, found them on the eve of the archery meeting, and was prevailed upon by his mother, far too ailing a woman to attend public places, to escort his sister and her chaperone—a female cousin on a visit at the house—to the appointed scene of amusement.

A happy party were they that evening! Horace, restored to his own country and his own home, his birthplace, and the scene of his earliest and happiest recollections, seated between his mild, placid, gracious mother, and the pretty timid sister, with whose simplicity and singleness of mind he was enchanted, seemed to have nothing more to desire on earth. He was, however, sensible to something like a revulsion of feeling; for, besides being a dutiful inheritor of his father's aversions and prejudices, he had certain ancient quarrels of his own—*démêlés* with gamekeepers, and shooting and fishing squabbles, and such like questions, to settle with Mr. Page. He did certainly feel something like disappointment when, on inquiring into those family details which his long absence had rendered so interesting, he found this their old hereditary enemy, the man whom he thought it meritorious to hate, transmuted into their chief adviser and friend. Mr. Page had put a stop to a lawsuit in which his mother's dower and his sister's small fortune were involved, and had settled the matter for them so advantageously that they were better off than before; Mr. Page had discovered and recovered the family plate abstracted by a thieving butler, and had moreover contrived, to the unspeakable comfort of both ladies, that the thief should not be hanged; Mr. Page had sent out to Russia, in a most advantageous situation, the pet and *protégé* of the family; Mr. Page had transported to the Swan River a *vautrien* cousin, the family plague; Mr. Page had new-filled the conservatory; Mr. Page had new-clothed the garden wall; and, finally, as Frances declared with tears in her eyes, Mr. Page had saved her dear mother's life by fetching Mr. Brodie in the crisis of a quinsy, in a space of time which, considering the distance, would seem incredible. This last assertion completely silenced Horace, who, to the previous feats, had exhibited a mingled incredulity of the benefits being really conferred, and an annoyance at receiving benefits from such a quarter, supposing them to be as great as their glowing gratitude represented. He said no more; but the feeling continued, and when poor Frances began to talk of her dear friend and schoolfellow, Lucy, Mr. Page's only child—of her talent and beauty, and her thousand amiable qualities—and when Mrs. Vernon added a gentle hint as to the large fortune that she would inherit, Horace smiled and said nothing, but went to bed as thoroughly determined to hate Mr. Page, and to find his daughter plain and disagreeable, as his deceased father, the general, could have done for the life of him. "I see your aim, my dear mother and sister," thought he to himself; "but if my fortune be limited, so are my wishes; and I am not the man to enact Master Fenton to this Anne Page of yours, or Lucy, or whatever her name may be, though she were the richest tallow-merchant's daughter in all Russia."

So thinking he went to bed, and so thinking he arose the next morning—the great morning of the archery meeting; and his spleen was by no means diminished when, on looking out of his window, the great ugly red house of his rich neighbour stared him in the face; and on looking to the other side of the park, he was differently but almost as unpleasantly affected by an object on which most persons would have gazed with delight,—his pretty little sister, light and agile as a bird, practising at the target, and almost dancing with joy as she lodged an arrow within the gold:—for Horace, just arrived from the continent, was not only quite free from the prevailing mania, but had imbibed a strong prejudice against the amusement, which he considered too frivolous for men, and too full of attitude and display for women,—effeminate in the one sex, and masculine in the other.

He loved his sister, however, too well to entertain the slightest idea of interrupting a diversion in which she took so much pleasure, and which was approved by her mother and sanctioned by general usage. He joined her, therefore, not intending to say a word in disapprobation of the sport, with a kind observation on her proficiency and a prognostic that she would win the Silver Arrow, when all his good resolutions were overset by her reply.

"Oh, brother!" said Frances in a melancholy tone, "what a pity it is that you should have stayed all the summer in Germany, where you had no opportunity of target practice,—or else you too might have won a silver arrow, the gentleman's prize!"

"I win a silver arrow!" exclaimed Horace, nearly as much astonished, and quite as much scandalized, as Miss Arabella Morris when threatened by Poor Jack to be made a first lieutenant:—"I win a silver arrow!"

"Why not?" rejoined Frances. "I am sure you were always cleverer than anybody; you always carried away the prizes at school and the honours at College; and I don't suppose you have lost your ambition."

"Ambition!" again echoed Horace, who, a very clever young man, and by no means devoid of that high quality, thought of it only in its large and true sense, as the inspiration which impels the conqueror of nations, or, better still, the conqueror of arts, the painter, the sculptor, the poet, the orator,

in the noble race of fame. "Ambition!" once again exclaimed Horace—"ambition to make a hole in a piece of canvass!"

"Nay, dear brother, surely it is skill."

"Skill! What was the name of the emperor who, when a man had attained to the art of throwing a grain of millet through the eye of a needle, rewarded *his skill* with the present of a bushel of millet? You remember the story, Frances? That emperor was a man of sense."

"Oh, brother!" exclaimed Fanchon, shocked in her turn at this irreverent treatment of the object of her enthusiastic zeal, —"dear brother!—But, to be sure, they have no archery on the continent."

"No," returned Horace; "they are wiser. Though I believe there are bows—bows made of whalebone—amongst some of the rudest tribes of the Cossacks. *They* use the weapon, in common with other savages; but wherever civilization has spread, it has disappeared; and I don't know," pursued this contumacious despiser of the bow, "that one could find a better criterion to mark the boundary of cultivated and uncultivated, intellectual and unintellectual nations, than their having so far kept up with the stream of improvement as to abandon so ineffectual a mode of procuring their food or slaying their enemies, and taken to steel and gunpowder."

"Oh, brother, brother!" rejoined the disappointed damsel, "what sad prejudices you have brought home! I made sure of your liking an amusement so chivalrous and aristocratic!"

"Chivalrous!" retorted the provoking Horace: "why not go to the fountain-head—to Chaucer—or to Froissart,—Scott, who amongst his thousand services to the world has taught everybody, even young ladies, the usages of by-gone ages, might have told you that the knights, whether of reality or of romance, fought with the lance, and in armour, and on horseback. You should have gotten up a tournament, Fanchon, if you wished to restore the amusements of the days of chivalry: and, as to the bow being aristocratic—why, it was the weapon of thieves and outlaws in its most picturesque use, and of the common soldiers of the time in its most respectable. The highwayman's pistols, Fanchette, or the brown musket! Choose which you will."

"Nay, brother! I mean in a subsequent age—as an amusement," again pleaded poor Fanchette. "I am sure, if you were arguing my side of the question, you could bring fifty quotations from the old poets to prove that in that sense it was aristocratic. Could not you, now? Confess! you who never forget anything!"

"Nay," retorted her brother, laughing, "it is hardly handsome to contend with so courteous an adversary: but, without pleading guilty to the memory of which you are pleased to accuse me—for, Heaven have mercy upon that man who shall recollect all that he reads!—I do remember me of a certain passage very apropos to my line of argument, in a certain comedy called 'The Wits,' written by a certain knight yclept William Davenant, who, if old Master Aubrey's scandal may be believed, (and the gossip of two hundred years ago assumes, be it observed, a far more lofty and venerable air than the tittle-tattle of yesterday,) might boast a more than dramatic relationship to the greatest poet that ever lived—William Shakspeare.* A dashing gallant of those days is promising his fair mistress to reform: how he kept his word, is no concern of mine; but thus, amongst other matters, saith the gentleman:—

> ——'This deboshed whingard
> I will reclaim to comely bow and arrows,
> And shoot with haberdashers at Finsbury,
> And be thought the grand-child of Adam Bell.'

"Now, what do you say to this, fair lady? I'faith I wish that for just ten minutes—no longer—I *had* the memory which you impute to me, for the sole purpose of smothering you with quotations to the same effect."

"Well! it is confined to the gentry now, at all events. You cannot deny, brother, that it is all the fashion at the present day."

"Which is tantamount to saying," responded the stubborn disputant, "that it will be out of fashion to-morrow. Aristocratic indeed!—why, the 'haberdashers' apprentices' will be shooting in every tea-garden round London before the summer is over. 'And what for no?' as Meg Dods would say: the recreation is just within the reach of their ability, pecuniary and mental. And here in the country, where every body that can command a cow's grass can set up the butts and shoot with double ends, as you call them, why, if you expect to keep your sport to yourself, Miss Fanny, you are mistaken."

"At all events, Horace, it is classical," said Miss Fanny, pushed to her last defence; "and that, to a traveller just from Greece, ought to be some recommendation. How often have I heard you say, that 'Philoctetes' is the second tragedy in the world,—that which approaches next to Lear in the great dramatic purpose of rousing pity and indigna-

*Sir William Davenant had the luck to be connected with great names and great events. To say nothing of historical matters—with which, however, he was much mixed up—and the kings and queens and princes amongst whom he lived, he is reported to have been Shakspeare's illegitimate son; to have been saved from execution at Milton's intercession, whose life he had the honour and happiness of saving in return: and he certainly joined Matthew Locke in producing "Macbeth" with the grandest music; helped Dryden to alter—that is, to spoil—"The Tempest;" had one of the two theatrical patents, introduced painted scenes, and was buried close to Chaucer.

tion! And what is 'Philoctetes' about, from first to last, but the bow and arrows of Hercules? And where in all Homer—all Pope's Homer, I mean, (for I do not know the original—I wish I did,) can we find more beautiful lines than those which describe Ulysses bending the bow. I will match my quotation against yours, brother, if you will consent to rest the cause upon that issue," continued Frances, beginning to repeat, with great animation and gracefulness, the verses to which she had alluded:

'And now his well-known bow the master bore,
Turn'd on all sides, and view'd it o'er and o'er:
Lest time or worms had done the weapon wrong,
Its owner absent, and untried so long.
While some deriding;—How he turns the bow!
Some other like it sure the man must know,
Or else would copy; or in bows he deals;
Perhaps he makes them—or perhaps he steals.

* * * * * * *

Heedless he heard them, but disdained reply;
The bow perusing with exactest eye.
Then, as some heavenly minstrel, taught to sing
High notes responsive to the trembling string,
To some new strain when he adapts the lyre,
Or the dumb lute refits with vocal wire,
Relaxes, strains, and draws them to and fro;
So the great master drew the mighty bow:
And drew with ease. One hand aloft display'd
The bending horns, and one the string essay'd.
From his essaying hand the string let fly
Twang'd short and sharp, like the shrill swallow's cry.
A general horror ran through all the race,
Sunk was each heart, and pale was every face.
Signs from above ensued: th' unfolding sky
In lightning burst; Jove thunder'd from on high.
Fired at the call of Heaven's almighty lord,
He snatch'd the shaft that glitter'd on the board:
(Fast by, the rest lay sleeping in the sheath,
But soon to fly, the messengers of death.)

Now, sitting as he was, the cord he drew,
Through every ringlet levelling his view;
Then notch'd the shaft, released, and gave it wing;
The whizzing arrow vanish'd from the string,
Sung on direct and threaded every ring.
The solid gate its fury scarcely bounds;
Pierced through and through, the solid gate resounds.'

"Bravo, Fanchon!" exclaimed Horace, as his sister paused, half blushing at the display into which the energy of her defence had provoked her,—"Bravo! my own dear little sister! Beautiful lines they are, and most beautifully recited; and Pope's, sure enough—none of Broome's or Fenton's botchery. One may know the handiwork of that most delicate artist, meet it where one will.

"Or the dumb lute refits with vocal wire.'

Who but the tuneful hunchback of Twickenham could have put such words to such a thought? Then the repetition of the same phrase, like the repetitions in Milton, or the returns upon the air in Handel! Thank you a thousand times, my dearest Fanny, for such a proof of your good taste. I'll forgive the archery, upon the strength of it."

"And the Apollo, brother," pursued Fanchon, following up her victory,—"was not he an archer, the Apollo Belvidere?"

"Nay, Fanchon," replied her brother, laughing, "do not claim too much; that's uncertain."

"Uncertain! How can you say so? Don't you remember the first line of Mr. Milman's poem,—that matchless prize-poem, which Mrs. Siddons is said to have recited in the Louvre, at the foot of the statue, and in presence of the author; one of the finest compliments, as I have heard you say, ever paid to man or to poet:

'Heard ye the arrow hurtle in the sky?
Heard ye the dragon monster's deathful cry?'

"Is not 'hurtle' a fine word? And are not these great authorities?"

"Sophocles, and Homer, and the Apollo, and Mr. Milman? Yes, indeed they are; and under their sanction I give you full leave to win the Silver Arrow."

"And you will try to win it yourself, Horace? I do not mean to-day, but at the next meeting."

"No, Fanchon! That is too much to promise."

"But you will go to the archery with me?"

"Yes; for I wish to see many old friends—amongst the rest, the kind and excellent owner of Oakley, and his noble and charming lady: and, as I said before, you have my full permission to bring home the Silver Arrow."

"I should like to do so, of all things," replied Fanchon, "in spite of your contempt; from which I would lay my best arrow that you will soon be converted, and my second-best that I could name the converter. But my winning the prize is quite out of hope," continued the young lady, who, thoroughly unlucky in her choice of subjects, had no sooner run to earth one of Horace's prejudices, than she contrived to start another: "there is no hope whatever of my winning the prize; for though I can shoot very well here and at the other house——"

"At the other house," thought Horace, almost starting, as the staring red mansion, of which he had lost sight during the archery dispute, and Mr. Page, with all his iniquities, passed before his mind's eye,—"the other house! Are they as intimate as that comes to?"

"And can even beat Lucy," pursued poor Fanchon.

"Lucy again!" thought her brother.

"When we are by ourselves," continued she; "but before strangers I am so awkward, and nervous, and frightened, that I always fail. I should like dearly to win the arrow, though, and you would like that I should win it, I am sure you would," added she; "and Lucy says, that if I could but think of something else, and forget that people were looking at me, she is sure I should succeed. I do

really believe that Lucy would rather I should win it than herself, because she knows it would give so much pleasure, not only to me, but to mamma."

"Nothing but Lucy!" again thought Horace. "It seems as if there were nothing to do in this life but to shoot at a target, and nobody in the world but Miss Lucy Page.—Pray, Fanchette," said he aloud, "what brought about the reconciliation between Mr. Page's family and ours? When I left England, we had not spoken for years."

"Why, very luckily, brother, just after you went abroad," rejoined Fanchette, "one of the tenants behaved very unjustly, and insolently, and ungratefully to mamma; and when the steward threatened to punish him for his misconduct, he went immediately to Mr. Page, knowing that he had been at variance with our poor father, to claim his patronage and protection. However, Mr. Page was not the man to see a woman and a widow, an unprotected female, as he said——"

"He might have said, a lady, Miss Fanny!" again thought the ungrateful Horace——

"Imposed upon," continued Fanny. "So he came straight to dear mamma, offered her his best services on this occasion and any other, and has been our kindest friend and adviser ever since."

"I dare say," said the incorrigible Horace; "and Miss Lucy was your schoolfellow! What is she like now? I remember her, a pale, sickly, insignificant, awkward girl. Whom does she resemble? The bluff-looking father, or the vulgar mamma?"

"You are very provoking, brother," replied poor Fanny, "and hardly deserve any answer. But she is just exactly like this rose. She 's the prettiest girl in the county; every body allows that."

"Yes, a true country beauty, a full-blown cabbage-rose," again thought Horace; who had not condescended to observe that the half-blown flower which his sister had presented to him, and which he was at that instant swinging unconsciously in his hand, was of the delicate maiden blush, made to blow out of its season, as every gardener knows how, by cutting off the buds in the spring. "A full-blown blowzy beauty, as vulgar and as forward as both her parents, encouraging and patronizing my sister, forsooth!—she, the daughter of a tallow-merchant!—just as the father protects my dear mother. Really," thought Mr. Vernon, "our family is much indebted to them!" And with these thoughts in his mind, and contempt in his heart, he set off with Frances to the archery-ground.

On arriving at the destined spot, all other feelings were suspended in admiration of the extraordinary beauty of the scene. Horace, a traveller of no ordinary taste, felt its charm the more strongly from the decided English character impressed on every object. The sun was rather veiled than shrouded by light vapoury clouds, from which he every now and then emerged in his fullest glory, casting all the magic of light and shadow on the majestic oaks of the park,—oaks scarcely to be rivalled in the royal forests,—and on the venerable old English mansion which stood embosomed amongst its own rich woodland. The house was of the days of Elizabeth, and one of the most beautiful erections of that age of picturesque domestic architecture. Deep bay-windows of various shapes were surmounted by steep intersecting roofs and bits of gable-ends, and quaint fantastic cornices and high turret-like chimneys, which gave a singular grace and lightness to the building. Two of those chimneys, high and diamond-shaped, divided so as to admit the long line of sky between them, and yet united at distant intervals, linked together as it were by a chain-work of old masonry, might be a study at once for the painter and the architect. The old open porch too, almost a room, and the hall with its carved chimney-piece and its arched benches, the wainscoted chambers, the oak staircases, the upstair chapel, (perhaps oratory might be the fitter word,) the almost conventual architecture of some of the arched passages and the cloistered inner courts, were in perfect keeping; and the admirable taste which had abstained from admitting anything like modern ornament was felt by the whole party, and by none more strongly than by our fastidious traveller. He immediately fell into conversation with Mr. Oakley, the kind and liberal proprietor of the place, and his charming lady, (old friends of his family,) and was listening with interest to his detail of the iniquities of some former Duke of St. Albans, who, renting the mansion* as being convenient for the exercise of his function of hereditary grand falconer, had, in a series of quarrels with another powerful nobleman (the then Duke of Beaufort), extirpated the moor-fowl which had previously abounded on the neighbouring heath, when a startling clap on the shoulders roused his attention, and that night-

*There is another still more interesting story connected with Oakley. An ancestor of the present proprietor was lost, bewildered, benighted, during some tremendous storm on the heath before alluded to, and, being of delicate health and nervous habits, had fairly given up all hopes of reaching his own house alive; when suddenly the church clock of the neighbouring town of W—— striking four, happened to make itself heard through the wintry storm, and gave him sufficient intimation of his position to guide him safely home. In memory of this interposition, which he considered as nothing less than providential, Mr. Oakley assigned forty shillings a year in payment of a man to ring a bell at four o'clock every morning in the parish church of W——: and by that tenure the estate is still held. This is literally true. A circumstance somewhat similar occurring to the proprietor of Bamborough Castle, in Northumberland, is said to have been the cause of the erection of the famous lighthouse which has warned so many vessels from that dangerous coast.

mare of his imagination, Mr. Page, stood before him in an agony of good-will, noisier and more boisterous than ever.

Not only Mr. Page, shaking both his hands with a swing that almost dislocated his shoulders, but Mrs. Page, ruddy, portly, and smiling, the very emblem of peace and plenty, and Mrs. Dinah Page, Mr. Page's unmarried sister, a grim, gaunt, raw-boned woman, equally vulgar-looking, in a different way, and both attired in the full shroud uniform,* stood before him. At a little distance, talking to his sister, and evidently congratulating her on his return, stood Lucy, simply but exquisitely dressed, a light embroidery of oak-leaves and acorns having replaced the bows which made the other young ladies seem in an eternal flutter of green ribands; and so delicate, so graceful, so modest, so sweet, so complete an exemplification of innocent and happy youthfulness, that, as Horace turned to address her and caught his sister's triumphant eye, the words of Fletcher rose almost to his lips—

"As a rose at fairest,
Neither a bud, nor blown."

Never was a more instantaneous conversion. He even, feeling that his first reception had been ungracious, went back to shake hands over again with Mr. Page, and to thank him for his services and attentions to his mother during his absence; and when his old opponent declared with much warmth, that any little use he might have been of was doubly repaid by the honour of being employed by so excellent a lady, and by the unspeakable advantage of her notice to his Lucy, Horace really wondered how he could ever have disliked him.

The business of the day now began—"Much ado about nothing," perhaps—but still an animated and pleasant scene. The pretty processions of young ladies and nicely-equipped gentlemen marching to the sound of the bugle from target to target, the gay groups of visiters sauntering in the park, and the outer circle of country people, delighted spectators of the sport, formed altogether a picture of great variety and interest.

Lucy and Frances were decidedly the best shots on the ground; and Horace, who was their constant attendant, and who felt his aversion to the sport melting away, he could not very well tell how, was much pleased with the interest with which either young markswoman regarded the success of the other. Lucy had, as she declared, by accident, once lodged her arrow in the very centre of the target, and was as far before Frances as Frances was before the rest. But Lucy, although the favourite candidate, seemed less eager for the triumph than her more timid friend, and turned willingly to other subjects.

"You are admiring my beautiful dress, Mr. Vernon, as well you may," exclaimed she, as she caught his eye resting on her beautiful figure: "but it is Frances who ought to blush, for this delicate embroidery is her work and her taste, one of a thousand kindnesses which she and dear Mrs. Vernon have been showering upon me during the last six years. She did not act quite fairly by me in this matter, though; for she should have allowed me, though I cannot paint with the needle as she does, to try my skill in copying her handiwork,—and I will, against the next meeting, although it will be only displaying my inferiority. I never saw this dress, or had a notion of it, till last night, when she was forced to send it to be tried on. You do not know your sister yet!"

"I am better acquainted with her than you think I am," exclaimed Horace. "We have been holding a long argument this morning: and nothing, you know, draws out a young lady like a little contradiction. I must not tell you the subject, for you would certainly be on Frances's side."

"Yes! certainly I should," interrupted the fair lady; "be the subject what it might—right or wrong, I should take part with dear Frances. But you must not quarrel with her—no, not even in jest,—she loves you so, and has so longed for your return. I doubt your knowing her yet, even although you have had the advantage of a dispute; which is, as you say, an excellent recipe for drawing out a young lady. I do not think you know half her merits yet—but you will find her out in time. She is so timid, that sometimes she conceals her powers from those she loves best; and sometimes from mere nervousness they desert her. I am glad that she has shot so well to-day; for, trifling as the object is, (and yet it is a pretty English amusement, an old-fashioned national sport—is it not?)—trifling as the object may be, everything that tends to give her confidence in herself, is of consequence to her own comfort in society. What a shot was that!" continued she, as Frances's arrow lodged in the target, and the bugles struck up in honour of "a gold"—"What a shot! and how ashamed she is at her own success! Now you shall see me fail and not be ashamed of my failure." And she shot accordingly, and *did* fail; and another round, with nearly equal skill on the part of Frances, and equal want of it on that of her friend, had reversed their situations, and put Miss Vernon at the top of the list; so that when the company adjourned to their early dinner, Frances was the favourite candidate, although the two young ladies were, in sporting phrase, neck and neck.

* Persons of a lower caste in society are always exceedingly observant of this sort of regulations, with which those of a superior class (who know exactly the worth, or the worthlessness, of such forms) feel that they may dispense, unless they happen to chime in with their convenience or their inclination. An over-anxiety to be in the fashion is one of the distinctive marks of a *parvenu*.

After dinner, however, when the gentlemen joined the ladies and the sports recommenced, Miss Page was nowhere to be found. Mrs. Page, on her daughter being called for, announced to the secretary that Lucy had abandoned the contest; and on being anxiously questioned by Horace and Frances as to the cause of her absence, she avowed that she could not very well tell what was become of her, but that she fancied she was gone with her father and Aunt Dinah in search of the Ladye Fountain, a celebrated spring, situate somewhere or other in the seven hundred acres of fir-wood which united the fertile demesne of Oakley to another fine estate belonging to the same gentleman; a spring which Aunt Dinah had remembered in her childhood, before the fir-trees were planted, and had taken a strong fancy to see again. "And so Lucy," pursued Mrs. Page, "has left the archery and her chance of the Silver Arrow, and has even run away from Miss Vernon, to go exploring the woods with Aunt Dinah."

"She is gone that Frances may gain the prize, sweet creature that she is!" thought our friend Horace.

Two hours afterwards, Horace Vernon found his way through the dark and fragrant fir plantations to a little romantic glade, where the setting sun glanced between the deep red trunks of the trees on a clear spring, meandering over a bed of mossy turf inlaid with wild thyme, and dwarf heath, and the delicate harebell, illumining a figure fair as a wood-nymph, seated on the fantastic roots of the pines, with Mr. Page on one side and Aunt Dinah on the other. "You have brought me good news," exclaimed Lucy, springing forward to meet him; "Frances, dear, dear Frances, has won the Silver Arrow!"

"I have brought you the Silver Arrow for yourself," replied Horace, offering her the little prize token, quite forgetting how exceedingly contemptible that prize had appeared to him that very morning; or, if remembering it, thinking only that nothing could be really contemptible which gave occasion to so pretty and so unostentatious a sacrifice of "a feather in the cap of youth."

"But how can that be, when, even before I declined the contest, Frances had beaten me? The prize is hers, and must be hers. I cannot take it; and even if it were mine, it would give me no pleasure. It was her success that was my triumph. Pray, take the arrow back again. Pray, pray, my dear father, make Mr. Vernon take the arrow."

"How am I to make him, Lucy?" inquired her father, laughing.

"It is yours, I assure you," replied Horace; "and Frances cannot take it, because she has just such another of her own. Did not you know that there were two prizes?—one for the greatest number of good shots,—the highest score, as Mr. Secretary calls it, which, owing probably to your secession, has been adjudged to Frances; and another for the best shot of all, which was fairly won by you. And now, my dear Mr. Page, I, in my turn, shall apply to you to make your daughter take the arrow; and then I must appeal to her to honour me with her hand for the two first sets of quadrilles, and as many more dances as she can spare to me during the evening."

And the young lady smiled very graciously, and they danced together half the night.

"Well, brother," asked Frances, as they were returning home together from Oakley Park, "how have you been amused at the archery meeting?"

"Hem!" ejaculated Horace; "that's a saucy question. Nevertheless, you shall have the truth. I liked it better than I expected. The place is beautiful, and the sport, after all, national and English."

"Then you mean to become an archer?"

"Perhaps I may."

"And to win the next Silver Arrow?"

"If I can."

"There's a dear brother! And how did you like our good friend Mr. Page? Did not you find him national and English also?"

"That's another saucy question, Miss Fanchon," again exclaimed Horace: "but I am in a truth-telling humour. I liked your good friend exceedingly; and heartily agree with him in thinking that the admission of the country people, through the kindness of Mr. Oakley and Lady Margaret, mixing the variety, and the crowd, and the animation of a fair with the elegance of a *fête champêtre*, formed by far the prettiest part of the scene. He is very English, and I like him all the better for so being," continued Horace, manfully. "And now, my dear little Fanny, to forestall that sauciest question of all, which I know to be coming, I give you warning before our good cousin here, that I will not tell you how I like Mr. Page's fair daughter until I am in a fair way of knowing how Mr. Page's fair daughter likes me."

"Thank Heaven!" thought Frances; "that was all that I wanted to know."

"And so, ladies both," added Horace, as the carriage drove up to the door of the Hall and he handed them out,—"it being now three o'clock in the morning, I have the honour of wishing you good-night."

Note.—This little tale of the Archery Ground is longer than is usual with me,—not for the benefit of its present race of readers, who may fairly be presumed to have had enough of the subject in the county newspapers and in country conversation, but because, if a few stray copies of a trifling book may be presumed to live for ten or a dozen years, it will then convey that sort of amusement with which we now and then contemplate some engraving of a costume

once fashionable, laughing saucily at our former selves, as we think—Did I really ever wear such a bonnet? or such a sleeve? In proportion to the popularity of this pretty amusement will be its transiency. The moment that it becomes common, (and that moment is approaching fast,) it will pass out of fashion and be forgotten. Nothing is so dangerous in this country as a too great and too sudden reputation. The reaction is overwhelming. We are a strange people, we English, and are sure to knock down our idols, and avenge on their innocent heads the sin of our own idolatry.

In the mean while archery has its day, (and even to have had its day, when that melancholy change of taste shall arrive, will be something,)—and it has also a minstrel of whom it has more than common cause to be proud. Every body knows that there is nothing more pleasant than the trifling of those whose trifling is merely a relaxation from graver and greater things. Now, it happens that in these parts—not indeed in the Oakley Park Club, but in one not a hundred miles distant—they are lucky enough to possess a person eminent in many ways, and good-humoured enough to have composed for the amusement of his neighbours one of the pleasantest ballads that has been seen since the days of Robin Hood. King Richard and Friar Tuck might have chanted it in the hermit's cell, and doubtless would have done so had they been aware of its existence. I cannot resist the temptation of quoting a few stanzas, in hopes of prevailing on the author (it is printed for private distribution) to make public the rest. It purports to be the Legend of the Pinner of Wakefield—I presume (although it is not so stated in the preface) of "George-a-Greene," who held that station, and whose exploits form the subject of a very pleasant old play. It begins as follows:

"The Pindar of Wakefield is my style,
And what I list I write;
Whilom a clerk of Oxenforde,
But now a wandering wight.

"When birds sing free in bower and tree,
And sports are to the fore,
With fiddle and long-bow forth I pace,
As Phœbus did of yore.

"The twang of both best liketh me
By those fair spots of earth,
Where Chaucer* conn'd his minstrelsy,
And Alfred drew his birth.

"And whatsoever chance conceit
Within my brain doth light,
It trickleth to my fingers' ends,
And needs I must indite.

"Even thus my godfather of Greece,
Whose worthy name I bear,
Of a cock or a bull, or a whale would sing,
And seldom stopp'd to care.

"'For whoso shall gainsay,' quoth he,
'My sovereign will and law,
Or carpeth at my strain divine
In hope to sniff some flaw,
Certes, I reck of the lousie knave
As an eagle of a daw.'

"Yet whomsoe'er in wrestling ring
He spied to bear him strong,
Or whom he knew a good man and true,
He clapp'd him in a song.

"Like him, it listeth me to tell
Some fytte in former years,
Of the merry men all and yeomen tall
Who were my jovial feres."

And so on to the end of the chapter.

* Chaucer, it is said, resided at Donnington Castle: Alfred was born at Wantage. Hence a clue to the locality of the ballad.

To illustrate Davenant's expression as quoted by Horace, I copy from a very accurate recorder of the antiquities of the metropolis an account of Finsbury Fields, in the days when haberdashers' apprentices and other city youths resorted to them for the purpose of Archery,—the remote and gorgeous days of the Maiden Queen.

It is very well known to every one who is at all acquainted with the ancient history or topography of London, that the northern part of Finsbury Fields—that is to say, from the present Bunhill Row almost to Islington—was once divided into a number of large irregular pieces of ground, enclosed by banks and hedges, constituting the places of exercise for the City Archers. Along the boundaries of each of these fields were set the various marks for shooting, formerly known under the names of Targets, Butts, Prickes, and Rovers; all which were to be shot at with different kinds of arrows. They were also distinguished by their own respective titles, which were derived either from their situation, their proprietors, the person by whom they were erected, the name of some famous archer, or perhaps from some circumstance now altogether unknown. These names, however, were often sufficiently singular; for in an ancient map of Finsbury Fields, yet extant, there occur the titles of "Martin's Monkie," the "Red Dragon," "Theefe in the Hedge," and the "Mercer's Maid." Indeed, one of these names, not less remarkable, was given so late as the year 1746, in consequence of a person, named Pitfield, having destroyed an ancient shooting-butt, and being obliged to restore it by order of an Act passed in 1632: the Artillery Company, to which it belonged, engraved upon the new mark the significant title of "Pitfield's Repentance." The general form of the Finsbury shooting-butts was that of a lofty pillar of wood, carved with various devices of human figures and animals, gaily painted and gilt; but there was also another kind, of which some specimens have remained until almost the present day. These consisted of a broad and high sloping bank of green turf, having tall wings of stout wooden paling, spreading out on each side. Such shooting-butts, however, were chiefly for the practice of the more inexpert archers, and not for those who, like Master Shallow's "old Double, would have clapt in the clout at twelve score, and carried you a forehand shaft at fourteen, and fourteen and a half." Upon this bank of turf was hung the target, and sometimes the side paling stretched out so as to form a long narrow lane for the archers to stand in; the principal intent of them being to protect spectators or passers-by from the danger of a random arrow, or an unskilful marksman: the latter, however, if in the Artillery Company, was not responsible for any person's life, if, previously to letting fly his arrow, he exclaimed "Fast!" The marks were erected at various distances from the shooting-places, some being so near as seventy-three yards, and others as far distant as sixteen score and two; though the ancient English bow is said sometimes to have been effective at so immense a distance as four hundred yards, or nearly a quarter of a mile. The fields in which these butts were placed, were, in the time of Elizabeth, a morass, subdivided by so many dikes and rivulets, that the ground was often new-made where the bowmen assembled, and bridges were thrown over the ditches to form a road from one field to another. Like the *Slough of Despond*, however, they swallowed so many cart-loads—yea, wagon-loads—of materials for filling them up, that old Stow once declared his belief to be, that if Moor-Fields were made level with the battlements of the City Wall, they would be little the drier, such was the marshy nature of the ground.

It was in this place that the various troops of archers which formed the celebrated pageant of the 17th of September, 1583, assembled previously to that famous spectacle, habited in those sumptuous dresses by which the bowmen of Elizabeth's reign were so emi-

nently distinguished. There came Barlow, Duke of Shoreditch; Covell, Marquis of Clerkenwell; Wood, the Marshal of the archers; the Earl of Pancras; the Marquesses of St. John's Wood, Hoxton, Shacklewell, and many other excellent marksmen, dignified by similar popular titles, long since forgotten. There was such glittering of green velvet and satin, such flapping of the coloured damask ensigns of the leaders, such displaying of wooden shields covered with gay blazonry, such quaintly-dressed masquers, such pageant-devices of the various London parishes which contributed to the show—such melodious shouts, songs, flights of whistling arrows, and winding of horns,—that, as an author of the time truly says, "such a delight was taken by the witnesses thereof, as they wist not for a while where they were." But for those who would enjoy this pageant to perfection, let them turn over the leaves of Marshal Wood's very rare tract, of "The Bowman's Glory," which really blazes with his minute description of the dresses and proceedings. Many a deed of archery, well befitting the fame of Robin Hood himself, was that day recorded upon the Finsbury shooting-butts; many of the competitors repeatedly hit the white, and more than one split in pieces the arrow of a successful shooter.

It is clear from the admirable dialogue between Silence and Shallow, alluded to above, (and Shakspeare is the best authority for everything, especially for English manners,) that in the days of Elizabeth at least, archery was, as the hero of my little story truly said, a popular, and not an aristocratic amusement.

THE YOUNG PAINTER.

The death of a friend so ardently admired, so tenderly beloved, as Henry Warner, left poor Louis nearly as desolate as he had been when deprived in so fearful a manner of his early instructor, the good Abbé. Bijou, too, seemed again, so far as nature permitted, sorrow-stricken; and Mrs. Duval and Stephen Lane, both after their several fashions, sympathized with the grief of the affectionate boy. The fond mother fretted, and the worthy butcher scolded amain; and this species of consolation had at first the usual effect of worrying, rather than of comforting its unfortunate object. After a while, however, matters mended. Instead of nursing his depression in gloomy inaction, as had been the case after his former calamity, Louis had from the first followed the dying injunction of his lamented friend, by a strenuous application to drawing, in the rules of which he was now sufficiently grounded to pursue his studies with perceptible improvement; and time and industry proved in his case, as in so many others, the best restorers of youthful spirits. His talent too began to be recognized; and even Stephen Lane had given up, half grumblingly, his favourite project of taking him as an apprentice, and did not oppose himself so strenuously as heretofore to the connexion which Mrs. Duval now began to perceive between her own dream of the pot of gold and Louis's discovery of the paint-pot. "To be sure," thought honest Stephen, "women will be foolish and fanciful, even the best of 'em. But I've noticed, by times, that every now and then one of their silliest fancies shall come true, just out of contrariness. So it's as well to humour them: and besides, if, as my Margaret thinks, Madam St. Eloy should be taking a fancy to the boy, it would be as good as finding a pot of gold in right earnest. Madam must be near upon seventy by this time. Ay, she was a fine grown young lady, prancing about upon her bay pony when first I went to live with Master Jackson—and that's fifty years agone: and she's a single woman still, and has no kindred that ever I heard of; for her brother, poor gentleman, left neither chick nor child: and she must be worth a power of money, besides the old house and the great Nunnery estate—a mort of money, and nobody to leave it to but just as she fancies! I scorn legacy-hunting," pursued the good butcher, checking and correcting the train of his own thoughts; "but howsomdever, if the old lady should take a liking to Louis, why she might go farther and fare worse. That's all I shall say in the business."

Madam St. Eloy was a person of no small consequence in Belford, where she spent regularly and liberally the larger part of her large income. She lived not in the town, but in an ancient mansion called The Nunnery, just across the river, erected, it is to be presumed, on the site of an old monastic establishment, and still retaining popularly its monastic name in spite of the endeavours of its Huguenot possessors to substitute the more protestant title of "The Place."

Very harshly must its conventual appellation have sounded in the ears of the founder of this branch of the St. Eloy family, a Huguenot refugee of Elizabeth's days, whose son, having become connected with that most anti-catholic monarch James the First, by marrying a lady about the person of Anne of Denmark, and who had been in his childhood the favourite attendant of Prince Charles, had bequeathed to his successors all the chivalrous loyalty, the devotion, and the prejudices of a cavalier of the Civil wars; prejudices which, in the person of their latest descendant, Madeleine de St. Eloy, had been strengthened and deepened by her having lost, in the course of one campaign, an only brother and a betrothed lover, when fighting for the cause of French loyalty in the early part of the revolutionary war.

This signal misfortune decided the fate and the character of the heiress of the St. Eloys. Sprung from a proud and stately generation, high-minded, and reserved, she, on becoming mistress of herself and her property, withdrew almost entirely from the ordinary commerce of the world, and led, in her fine old mansion, a life little less retired than that of a protestant nun.

No place could be better adapted for such a seclusion. Separated from the town of Belford by the great river, and the rich and fertile

chain of meadows, and from the pretty village, to which it more immediately belonged, by a double avenue almost like a grove of noble oaks, it was again defended on the landward side by high walls surrounding the building, and leading through tall iron gates of elaborate workmanship into a spacious court; whilst the south front opened into a garden enclosed by equally high walls on either side, and bounded by the river, to which it descended by a series of terraces of singular beauty, planted with evergreens and espaliers, mixed with statues and sun-dials and vases, and old-fashioned flowers in matchless luxuriance and perfection.

Nothing could exceed the view of Belford from this terraced garden. On the one side, the grey ruins of the abbey and their deep arched gateway; on the other the airy elegance of the white-fronted terraces and crescents: between these extreme points, and harmonizing—toning down, as it were, the one into the other, the old town so richly diversified in form and colour, with the fine Gothic towers and tapering spires of the churches, intermixed with trees and gardens, backed by woody hills, and having for a foreground meadows alive with cattle, studded with clumps of oak, and fringed with poplars and willows leading to the clear and winding river—the great river of England, with its picturesque old bridge, and its ever-varying population of barges and boats. By far the finest view at Belford was from the terrace-gardens of the Nunnery.

Very few, however, were admitted to participate in its beauties. Miss, or as she rather chose to be called, Mrs. St. Eloy, gradually dropped even the few acquaintances which the secluded habits of her family had permitted them to cultivate amongst the most aristocratic of the country gentry, and, except a numerous train of old domestics and an occasional visit from the clergyman of the parish, or her own physician and apothecary, rarely admitted a single person within her gates.

Still more rarely did she herself pass the precincts of the Nunnery. Before the abolition of the races, indeed, she had thought it a sort of duty to parade once around the course in a coach thirty years old at the very least, drawn by four heavy black horses, with their long tails tied up, not very much younger, driven by a well-wigged coachman and *two* veteran postilions (a redundancy of guidance which those steady quadrupeds were far from requiring), and followed by three footmen mounted on steeds of the same age and breed. But the cessation of the races deprived Belford of the view of this solemn procession, which the children of that time used to contemplate with mingled awe and admiration,—the rising generation now-a-days would probably be so irreverent as to laugh at such a display,—the Nunnery coach (although the stud of black horses was still kept up) had hardly issued from the court-yard, unless occasionally to do honour to some very aristocratic high sheriff, or to attend the funeral of a neigbouring nobleman; the parish church which Mrs. St. Eloy regularly attended being so near, that nothing but age or infirmity could have suggested the use of a carriage.

Of age or infirmity the good lady, in spite of Stephen's calculation, bore little trace. She was still a remarkably fine woman,* with a bright eye, a clear olive complexion, and a slender yet upright and vigorous figure. Little as she mingled in society, I have seldom known a person of her age so much admired by either sex. The ladies all joined in praising her old-fashioned, picturesque, half-mourning costume, never changed since first assumed in token of grief for the loss of her lover, and the stately but graceful courtesy of her manner on any casual encounter; whilst the gentlemen paid her the less acceptable and more questionable compliment of besieging her with offers of marriage, which, with a characteristic absence of vanity, she laid entirely to the score of the Nunnery Estate. It was said that three in one family, a father and two sons—all men of high connexions, and all in one way or another as much in want of money as any three gentlemen need be—had made their proposals in the course of that summer, during which she completed her thirteenth lustrum.

Certain it is, that the lapse of time by no means diminished her matrimonial qualifications in the eyes of such speculating bachelors as were looking about for a *bon parti;* and it is at least equally certain, that no woman was ever less likely to fall into the nuptial trap than Mrs. St. Eloy. She was protected from the danger by every circumstance of character and situation; by her high notions of decorum and propriety—by real purity of mind—by the romance of an early attachment—by the pride of an illustrious descent—by her long and unbroken seclusion, and by the strong but minute chains of habit with which she had so completely environed herself, that the

* A friend of mine, no longer young, but still most charming in mind and person, says, from experience, "that it is a fine thing to be a fine woman at fifty-eight" (our Mrs. St. Eloy might have called herself ten years older). "The men," says my friend, "are not afraid of provoking flirtation or getting into a scrape; and they do not know but I may have been a beauty in my youth, and they may be paying homage to a shrine in decay, at which the beaux of the county—the noble and the fashionable—might once have bowed. The women do not envy the setting sun, but are pleased to admire the sinking fading brightness with something like the feeling that mixes now and then in our praises of the dead,—the hope of the same benevolence when their sun is setting. Be assured that it is a very fine thing to be a fine woman at fifty-eight."—I must however add, that this lady, whose sunset is so charming, does not attempt, either in dress or manner, to appear a day younger than she really is. Perhaps *that* may be one reason why at fifty-eight she is still so much admired.

breach of etiquette in a German court would not have been more striking than any infraction of the rules of this maiden household.

All went as if by clock-work in the Nunnery. At eight Mrs. St. Eloy rose, and proceeded to a room called the chapel, built on the consecrated ground of the convent church, where Mrs. Dorothy Adams, an ancient spinster, who filled a post in the family between companion and lady's-maid, read prayers to the assembled servants. Then they adjourned to the breakfast-parlour, where, on a small japanned table, and in cups of pea-green china not much larger than thimbles, Mrs. Dorothy made tea. Then Mrs. St. Eloy adjourned to the audit-room, where the housekeeper, butler, and steward were severally favoured with an audience; and here she relieved the sick poor, (for she was a most charitable and excellent person,) partly by certain family medicines of her own compounding, which were for such things exceedingly harmless—that is to say, I never heard of anybody that was actually killed by them; partly by the far more useful donation of money. Here also she received other petitioners and complainants, who were accustomed to resort to her as a sort of female justice of the peace for redress of grievances; an office which she performed—as women, better partisans than arbitrators, are apt to perform such offices—with much zeal but little discretion, so that she got into divers scrapes, out of which her money and her attorney were fain to help her. Then she adjourned to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Dorothy read aloud the newspaper, especially all that related to war and battle, whilst her mistress sighed over her netting. Then, weather permitting, she took a walk in the garden. Then she dressed. Then at three o'clock she dined, sitting down alone (for Mrs. Dorothy did not partake of that meal with her lady) to such a banquet as might have feasted the mayor and corporation of Belford—I had almost said, of London—attended by the old butler, Mr. Gilbert by name, in his powdered pigtail, his silk stockings and flowered satin waistcoat, and three footmen liveried in blue and yellow. Then, fatigued with the labours of the day, she took a gentle nap. Then, at six precisely, she drank tea; after which it was Mrs. Adams's business to lose, if she could, several hits at backgammon. Then, at nine, she supped; at half-past, prayers were read in the chapel; and at ten precisely the whole household went to bed.

The monotony of this life was somewhat solaced by a passion for such birds as are commonly seen in cages and aviaries. Mrs. St. Eloy was noted especially for the breeding of canaries, whose noise, atrocious in most places, served here at least to break the conventual silence of the mansion; and for the education of linnets and goldfinches, to which, with unwearied patience, she taught a variety of such tricks as drawing their own water in a little bucket, fetching and carrying a bit of straw, and so forth.

Encouraged by success, she had lately undertaken the more difficult task of communicating musical instruction to a bullfinch, which already piped 'God save the King' almost as well as the barrel-organ from which it learned, and was now about to enter upon the popular air of 'Robin Adair', as performed by the same instrument. The bird itself, and the little organ from which it learned, were placed, for the sake of separation from the canaries which filled the drawing-room, in a spacious gallery forming one of the wings of the house and running over the laundry, an airy and beautiful apartment which Mrs. St. Eloy called the museum; and her pleasure in this occupation caused her to infringe more frequently on the long-established rules for the employment of her time than she had been known to do in the whole course of her spinstership. It was also the cause of her acquaintance with Louis Duval.

The little bird, to whom she and Mrs. Dorothy Adams had somehow given the unromantic name of Bobby, was so tame, that they were accustomed to let him out of his cage, and allow him to perch on the barrel-organ during the time of his music lesson. A pretty bird he was, with his grey back, and his red breast, and his fine intelligent eye; a pretty bird, and exceedingly pretty-mannered; he would bow and bend, and turn his glossy black head to one side and the other, and when offered a piece of sugar, (the cate he loved best,) would advance and recede with a very piquant mixture of shyness and confidence, afraid to take it from his lady's fair hand, and yet so nearly taking, that if thrown towards him he would pick it up before it reached the table. A charming bird was Bobby, and such a pet as never bird was before. I will venture to say, that Mrs. St. Eloy would rather have lost a thousand pounds than that bullfinch.

One day, however, that misfortune did befall her. It was on a fine morning towards the end of May, when the windows of the west gallery, which looked to the garden, were open, Mrs. Adams grinding the barrel-organ and Bobby perched upon it practising 'Robin Adair,' that the old butler, opening the door with unwonted suddenness, startled the bird, who flew out of the window and was half-way towards the river before the astounded females recovered the use of their tongues. The first use to which they put those members was of course a duett of scolding for the benefit of the butler; but as vituperation would not recover their pet, they intermitted their lecture and ordered a general muster in the garden in chase of the stray favourite.

There he was, amidst the white-blossomed cherry-trees and the espaliers garlanded with their pink blossoms; now perched on a sweet-

briar; now flitting across a yew hedge; now glancing this way, now darting that; now escaping from under the extended hand; now soaring as high again as the house. Footmen, coachman, postilions, housemaids, gardeners, dairy-maids, laundry-women, cook, scullion, housekeeper; the luckless butler, Mrs. Dorothy, and Mrs. St. Eloy,—all joined in the pursuit, which, for some time, owing to the coquetry of Bobby, who really seemed balancing between the joys of liberty and the comforts of home, had the proper mixture of hope and fear, of anxiety and uncertainty, that belong to such a scene; but at last a tremendous squall, uttered from the lungs of a newly-hired cockney housemaid, who had trod on a water-snake and expected nothing less than death to ensue,—which squall was reinforced from the mere power of sympathy, by all the females of the party,—produced a species of chorus so loud and discordant, and so unacceptable to the musical taste of our accomplished bullfinch, that the catastrophe which from the first Mrs. St. Eloy had dreaded immediately took place—the bird flew across the river, and alighted amongst some fine old hawthorns in the opposite meadow.

The Nunnery boat was (as in such cases always happens) locked up in the boat-house, and the key in the game-keeper's pocket, and the keeper Heaven knew where; the bridge was half a mile off, and not a soul within sight, nor a craft on the river except one little green boat—and that boat empty—moored close to the hawthorns on the opposite side. The recovery of Bobby seemed hopeless. Whilst, however, some were running to the bridge, and others attempting to catch sight of the stray bird, our friend Louis emerged from the May bushes, bullfinch in hand, jumped into his little boat, darted across the river, leaped ashore, and with a smiling courtesy, a gentle grace, which won every female heart in the garden, restored the trembling favourite to its delighted mistress.

Louis (now nearly fifteen) had so entirely the air and bearing of a gentleman's son, that Mrs. St. Eloy was treating him as an equal, and was distressed at not being able to find a reward adequate to the service, when Mr. Gilbert, the old butler, to whom he was already advantageously known, and who was enchanted to find his own misdemeanour so comfortably repaired, stepped forward and introduced him to his lady as the excellent lad who had detected the poor Abbé's murderer.

On this hint, Mrs. St. Eloy, after reiterated thanks and the kindest notice both of himself and the little Bijou, who was as usual his companion in the boat, took out her purse, and was about to force upon him a munificent recompense, when she was stopped by Louis, who, with an earnestness not to be overcome, entreated her "not to spoil the pleasure of one of the happiest moments of his life by any pecuniary offer. If her generosity considered so slight a service as worthy a reward, there was a favour—" And Louis, half repenting that he had said so much, blushed, hesitated, and stopped short.

The lady, however, insisted on his finishing his request; and then Louis confessed "that one of his chief desires was to be permitted to see a picture in her possession, a portrait of Charles the First by Vandyke; and that if he might be allowed that favour, he should consider himself as much her debtor as she was pleased, most erroneously, to profess herself his."

Charmed at once with the petition and the manner, (for the Vandyke portrait was the apple of her eye,) the lady of the Nunnery led the way directly to the west gallery, in one of the compartments of which hung the exquisite painting of which Louis had so often heard.

It is singular that in many portraits of those illustrious persons who have met with a remarkable and untimely death, the expression of the countenance often seems to foreshadow a lamentable end. Lawrence's portrait of Sir John Moore,* and almost all of the many pictures of the Princess Charlotte, whose large mysterious eye, with its intensity of sadness, presented such a contrast to her youthful bloom and brilliant fortunes, may serve to illustrate the observation; but its most striking confirmation is undoubtedly to be found in those splendid portraits of Charles by Vandyke, which seem at once to embody the character and the destiny of that mistaken and unhappy monarch. Those portraits, with their chivalrous costume and their matchless grace of air and attitude, are in themselves a history. Amidst the profound melancholy of that remarkable countenance, we recognize at once the despotic, obstinate, suspicious king; the accomplished and elegantly-minded gentleman; the puller-down of liberty, the setter-up of art; he who with so much taste for the highest literature, that he was known, as recorded by Milton, to make William Shakspeare "the closest companion of his solitudes," yet put his crown and life in jeopardy to suppress that freedom of thought which is the vital breath of poetry; the monarch who was in his own day so faithfully supported, so honestly opposed; and whom in after time his most admiring partisans cannot but blame, and his fiercest opponents must needs pity. The posthumous influence of beauty is not more stongly evinced by the interest which clings round the memory of

* A very fine copy of that most interesting picture has been made by an artist in the neighbourhood of Reading some years younger than my "Louis Duval," —a boy-painter who gives promise of no common talent. His name is Edmund Havell; and as his father, himself an excellent drawing-master, belongs to the family of that name who have long held a respectable station in English art, there is no fear but his genius will receive every advantage of cultivation and care.

Mary of Scotland, than the power of painting, by the charm which is flung about every recollection of Charles. If kings were wise, they would not fail to patronize the art which can so amply repay their protection.

Louis felt the picture as such a picture ought to be felt. He stood before it mute and motionless, quite forgetting to praise, with every faculty absorbed in admiration; and Mrs. St. Eloy had sufficient taste to appreciate the impression which this noble work of art had made on one who longed to become an artist. Even in common spectators the manner of seeing a picture is no mean test of character. Your superficial coxcomb (such, for example, as our friend King Harwood) shall skip up to a great painting, and talk that species of nonsense called criticism, praising and blaming to display his connoisseurship, flinging about flippant censure, and eulogy more impertinent still, as if he regarded the *chef d'œuvre* before him as a mere theme for the display of his own small knowledge and less wit. The man of genius, on the other hand, is happily free from the pretensions of a haunting self-conceit. His admiration, undisturbed by the desire of saying pretty things, is honest and genuine. I have seen a great orator awe-struck by the grandeur of Salvator, entranced by the grace of Guercino, and his whole mind so filled and saturated by the beauty of a singularly fine collection, that the conversation of persons worthy of their pictures—that conversation of which he is usually the life and ornament—seemed to put him out. The effort to talk disturbed the impression.

Just in this way felt Louis; and when Mrs. St. Eloy proceeded to show him some of the curiosities which her family, hoarders from generation to generation, had accumulated, and which were all gathered together in this spacious gallery—Japan cabinets full of valuable coins; Indian pagods; China monsters of the choicest ugliness; armour of the date of the Civil Wars, French and English; reliques protestant and loyalist, including a breast-plate of the Admiral de Coligni, a satin slipper once belonging to the unfortunate Madame Elizabeth, a spur of Prince Rupert's,* and what she valued beyond all other articles, the horn-book out of which the unhappy Charles learnt his alphabet—a pretty toy made of ivory, with gold letters;—when she produced these treasures for his gratification, and partly perhaps for her own, (for where is the pleasure of possessing a rarity unless other eyes see it?—we geranium-growers know that!)—Louis frankly confessed that he could look only at the picture; and the good old lady, instead of being offended at the neglect of her bijoux, kindly pressed him to come and see her and the Vankyke as often as he could spare time; and, on finding that, fearful of intruding, a week elapsed without his repeating his visit, she sent his friend Gilbert to bring him one fine morning to the Nunnery, and invited him to dine at her own table.

From this hour Louis became her declared favourite; and other observers, besides the good butcher, foreboded a total change of destiny to the fortunate boy. Louis himself, though utterly free from legacy-hunting and all mercenary speculations, had yet a secret design in his frequent visits to the west gallery. He longed to copy the Vandyke portrait; but, too modest to ask so great a favour, he contented himself with contemplating it as frequently as possible, and endeavouring to transfer its pearly colour and matchless expression to a study of the head which he was attempting from recollection at home.

In the mean time, his frequent visits were of almost equal service to himself and Mrs. St. Eloy. Tranquilly and innocently as her days had glided by, she was conscious of a new and most pleasurable developement of affections too long dormant, as she gazed with an almost motherly interest on the graceful and spirited boy, who, whilst overthrowing in his own person one of her most cherished prejudices in favour of high blood, by showing that the son of a pastry-cook might be one of nature's gentlemen, fell most naturally into her peculiarities and ways of thinking on other points; had learned from the Abbé to be as violent an anti-jacobin as she was herself, as thoroughly devoted to the cause of monarchy and the Bourbons; and demanded no other evidence than that of the Vandyke portrait to be as staunch an adherent to King Charles, as loyal a cavalier and as honest a hater of the Roundheads, as ever led a charge at the side of Prince Rupert. Louis was half French too, and so, after the lapse of two centuries, was his kind patroness: she clung to the country of her ancestors, the land where they had won their knightly arms and had ranked amongst nobles and princes; though, under the influence of different circumstances, she and her immediate progenitors had long embraced a political creed widely different from that of the Huguenot refugee, flying from the persecution of a despotic monarch, who had been the first inhabitant of the Nunnery. She loved the very name of Frenchman—always provided he were neither Republican nor Bonapartist, and in her secret soul attributed much of the elegance and talent of her young favourite to the southern blood that flowed in his veins.

Louis, on his part, looked with a mingled sentiment of love and veneration on the kind and gentle recluse, who cast aside for his sake her hereditary stateliness and her long habits of solitude, and treated him rather with the indulgent affection of a kinswoman than the condescension of a superior. Full of quickness and observation, he saw the little old-

* Vide note 1, at the end of the article.

maidish ways that mingled with her genuine benevolence of temper and her singular simplicity of character; but, grateful and warm-hearted, he liked her all the better for her harmless peculiarities, took a sincere interest in the hatching of her canary-birds, and assisted in the education of Bobby by adding the old French air of "Charmante Gabrielle" to his musical acquirements. Mrs. Dorothy Adams, with whom, as well as with the old butler, the lively lad was a great favourite, (and be it said, *par parenthèse*, that he who was favoured by one of these worthy personages, would not fail to rank high in the good graces of the other, they having been betrothed lovers for thirty years and odd, but still postponing their nuptials out of deference to the well-known opinions of their lady) — Mrs. Dorothy declared that his whistling was as good as the bird organ; Mrs. St. Eloy was enchanted; and Bobby himself, sharing, as it appeared, the fancy of his mistress, would fly to Louis, and perch upon his finger, and begin piping, the moment he entered the west gallery.

Besides this apartment, which on account of the beloved picture continued to be that which he most frequented, there was another room in the house of great attraction—a large, low, well-filled library, containing a really fine collection of old books, French and English, from Urry's Chaucer, and a black-letter Froissart downwards,—a collection rich especially in Memoirs of the Fronde and the Ligue in the one language, and in choice tracts of the times of the Commonwealth in the other,—full, in short, of that most fascinating sort of reading which may he called the materials of history.

Here Louis would sit for hours, poring over the narrative of Sir Thomas Herbert, or the then unpublished memoirs of Lady Fanshaw, or the ponderous but captivating volumes of Clarendon; or those volumes, more ponderous and more captivating still, the matchlessly interesting State Trials, of which the eleven folio volumes are all too little. And then he would lose all sense of time in the fascination of the old French Memoires, from Philip de Commines to the Cardinal de Retz, and wonder whether there were any portrait of Henri Quatre half so fine as Vandyke's Charles the First.

There was another compartment of the library which Louis liked to glance over and laugh at,—a miscellaneous corner where all manner of quaint odd books were gathered together—books that mingled as strangely as the breastplate of Coligni and the horn-book of King Charles. There lay the Duchess of Newcastle's Plays with the Religious Courtship; Maundrell's Travels from Aleppo to Jerusalem, with Tulwell's Flower of Fame; Quarles's Divine Emblems, with Culpepper's Herbal; and the Divine Fancies digested into Epigrams, side by side with the Complete Housewife, or Accomplished Gentlewoman's Companion;* which last choice volume was rendered still more valuable by certain MS. recipes, written in a small cramped hand and with a bold originality of orthography, which were curiously pasted on the blank leaves.

In a word, Louis loved the Nunnery. His little skiff (for he generally came by water) was so constantly directed thitherward, that, as Mrs. Duval observed, (who, charmed with the notice taken of him, was yet half jealous of his frequent absence,) "there was no doubt but the boat knew the way, and would have floated down the stream and stopped at the terrace-garden of its own accord." Even on the rarely occurring days that he did not spend with Mrs. St. Eloy, he used to row by the place, especially if he had been painting on the "Charles:" the very sight of the west gallery windows seemed to bring the picture more vividly before him. And now his study was so nearly finished, that, relying on Mrs. St. Eloy's indulgence, he had half resolved to bring the copy and see whether there was any faint and remote resemblance to the original. His mother said that no original could be finer;—but what would the Vandyke say?

One evening, towards the end of August, he was rowing past the Nunnery garden at an unusually late hour, having been tempted by the weather and the scenery, into a somewhat distant excursion, when, pausing involuntarily and looking towards the house,—long ago, as he well knew, shut up for the night,—he was struck by a singular appearance in the lower windows of the west wing, the windows of the laundry. The shutters were closed; but through every crevice appeared a light so brilliant and intense that you might have thought it was some illuminated ball-room. Startled, but still uncertain of the cause, Louis approached the garden and leapt ashore; and in that instant the flames burst forth from the farthest window of the wing,—burst forth with the rushing noise that none who has ever heard it can forget, and with a radiance so bright, so broad, so glaring, that in a moment the cool night air, the dark-blue firmament, and the quiet river were lighted up by the fearful element, and every leaf and flower in the garden became distinctly visible as beneath the noonday sun.

To call "Fire!" to rouse the sleeping inmates, to get Mrs. St. Eloy and her household into the garden, and to collect the neighbourhood, seemed to be the work of a moment to the alert and active boy. The villagers were rapidly called together by the alarum-bell, by the shrieks of frightened women, and, more than all, by the sheets of flame which glared on the water and coloured the sky; and the clergyman of the parish, a man of sense, cou-

* Vide note 2, at the end of the article.

rage, and presence of mind, employed the people in cutting a division between the wing and the body of the house, which — as the fire was luckily at the extreme end, that which was farthest from the main building— as there was a fire-engine on the premises and the village engine came lumbering in — as water was near and help abundant—there was every chance of effecting. That the whole wing must be destroyed was inevitable; for although as yet the fire was confined to the laundry, where it had burst out, yet the long tongues of flame were already creeping up the outside of the gallery, and the wood-work of the windows might be heard crackling in the occasional lull that intervened amid the frightful sounds of the most frightful of earthly scenes, —the senseless screams of women, the fierce oaths of men, the howling of startled dogs, the deep tolling of the bell, the strange heavy rumbling noise of the advancing engines, the hissing and bubbling of the water, the rush and roar of the fire!—By none who has once heard those sounds can they ever be forgotten!

Poor Mrs. St. Eloy, wrapped in a large cloak, sat pale and silent under the scorching trees of her beautiful garden, surrounded by her helpless maidens, lamenting, crying, scolding, bewailing in every mode of female terror; whilst her old men-servants were assisting the firemen and the stout peasantry in removing the furniture and working the engines. Mrs. Dorothy stood by her mistress, trying to comfort her; but bewildered by the horror of the scene, and by fears for her lover, who was foremost amongst the assistants, those endeavours were of a sort which, if Mrs. St. Eloy had happened to listen to them, would have had exactly the contrary effect: "Poor Bobby!" sobbed the weeping *dame d'atours:* "and Louis, poor dear boy! what can have become of him?"

"Louis!" echoed Mrs. St. Eloy; "gracious heaven, where is he? Who saw him last? Gilbert, Mr. Congreve!" exclaimed she, darting towards the fire, "have either of you seen Louis Duval?"

At that instant, Louis himself appeared, breathless and panting, at the great window of the gallery.

"A ladder!" was instantly the cry.

"No, no!" replied Louis; "feather-beds! mattresses! Quick! quick!" added he, as the flames were seen rising behind him: and the old butler placed the mattresses with the rapidity of thought, and with equal rapidity Louis flung out the Vandyke.

"Now a ladder!" cried the intrepid boy. "The floor is giving way!"

And clinging to the stone-work of the window, with hair and hands and garments scorched and blackened by the fire, but no material injury, he jumped upon the ladder, and on reaching the ground he found himself clasped in Mrs. St. Eloy's arms.

"Thank Heaven!" cried she, wiping away a gush of tears; — "thanks to all-gracious Heaven, you are safe, Louis! I care for nothing now. All other losses are light and trivial—you are saved!"

"Ay, dearest madam," replied Louis; "I, and a better thing—the Charles!—the Vandyke!—only see here!—safe and unhurt!"

"*You* are safe, Louis!" rejoined his friend. "There is no life lost," added she, more calmly.

"Poor Bobby!" sighed forth Mrs. Dorothy. And Louis smiled and drew the little creature safe and unhurt from his bosom, stroking its glossy head and whistling the old French tune of "Charmante Gabrielle;" and the bird took up the air, and piped by the light of the fire as if it had been noon-day.

"We are all safe, Mrs. Dorothy, Bobby and I, and the Vandyke; and here comes dear, good Mr. Gilbert, safe and sound too, to say that now the gallery has fallen in, the fire will soon be got under. We 'll have a search to-morrow for King Charles's horn-book, and the Admiral's cuirass, and Prince Rupert's spur; there 's some chance still that we may find them unmelted. But the portrait and Bobby were the chief things to save, — were they not, dearest madam? Worth all the rest,— are they not?"

"No, Louis, it is you that are worth all and everything," rejoined Mrs. St. Eloy, taking his arm to return into the house. "Your life, which you have risked for an old woman's whims, is more precious than all that I possess in the world," reiterated the grateful old lady; "and you ought not to have periled that life, even for Bobby and the Vandyke!" pursued she, slowly ascending the steps,— "not even for the King Charles! Remember, Gilbert, that you go for my solicitor the first thing to-morrow morning. I must alter my will before I sleep."

"Ho! ho!" chuckled our honest friend Stephen Lane, who had come up from Belford with the last reinforcements, and was selecting trusty persons to keep watch over the property. "Ho! ho!" chuckled Stephen, with a knowing nod and an arch wink, and a smile of huge delight; "altering her will, is she? That 'll be as good as a pot of gold, anyhow. I wonder now," thought Stephen to himself, "whether the foolish woman, his mother, will claim this as a making out of her dream? I dare say she will; for when a woman once takes a thing into her head, she 'll turn it and twist it a thousand ways but she 'll make it answer her purpose. Dang it!" chuckled the worthy butcher, rubbing his hands with inexpressible glee, "I 'm as glad as if I had found a pot of gold myself; he 's such a famous lad! And if his mother chooses to lay the good luck to her dream," exclaimed Stephen, magnanimously, "why let her."

Note 1.—The forms in which the desire of possessing some token of remarkable persons displays itself now-a-days are abundantly amusing—witness many of the relics of those great objects of enthusiasm, whether real or affected, Lord Byron and Napoleon. It was but last summer that I had an opportunity of seeing a curious memento of a living warrior. We live near Strathfieldsaye, and a pretty young damsel, a Londoner, happening to call on me, after going to see the place which its possessor has rendered famous, produced with the most innocent and triumphant delight "a very interesting memorial of the Great Captain," which she had been fortunate enough to procure, and for whose more safe and honourable keeping she intended, as soon as she returned home, to construct a white satin bag, embroidered in silver and perfumed with ottar of roses. Guess what this treasure might be, gentle reader!—No less than a lock of hair from the Duke of Wellington's horse's tail!

Note 2.—I cannot resist the temptation of quoting a few passages from one or two of these quaint old works, beginning, as bound in loyalty, with the dedication to "Quarles's Divine Fancies, digested into Epigrams, Meditations, and Observations. London: printed for William Meares, 1632. Dedicated to the Royall Bud of Majestie, and center of all our hopes and happiness, Prince Charles; son and Heir Apparent to the High and Mightie Charles, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland." In which "Epistle Dedicatorie," he says: "Modell of sweetnesse, let thy busie fingers entertain this slender presente; let thy harmless smiles crowne it; when thy infancie hath crackt the shell, let thy childhood taste the kernel: meantime, while thy little hands and eyes peruse it, lugg it in thy tender arms, and lay the burthen at thy royal parent's feet. Heaven bless thy youth with grace, and crown thy days with glory; angels conduct thee from the cradle to the crown; let the English rose and French lillie flourish in thy cheeks; let the most eminent qualities of thy renowned grandfathers meet in thy princely heart—" And so forth, longer than I care to tell.

Now for a choice recipe from "The Compleat Housewife, or Accomplished Gentlewoman's Companion, with curiously engraved copper-plates. To which is added a collection of above two hundred family receipts of medicines: viz. Drinks, sirops, salves, and ointments, never before made publick. By E. S. Printed for J. Pemberton, Golden Buck, over against St. Dunstan's Church, Fleet Street, 1730." —"The Lady Hewit's cordial water:—Take red sage, betony, spear-mint, hyssop, setwell, thyme, balm, pennyroyal, celandine, water-cresses, heart's-ease, lavender, angelica, germander, cole-mint, tamarisks, coltsfoot, valerian, saxefrage, pimpernel, vervain, parsley, rosemary, savory, scabious, agrimony, mother-thyme, wild marjorum, Roman wormwood, carduus benedictus, pellitory of the wall, field-daisies, (flowers and leaves). Of each of these herbs take a handful, after they are picked and washed. Of rose-yarrow, comfrey, plantain, camomile, sweet marjorum, maiden-hair; of each of these a handful before they are washed or picked. Red rose-leaves and cowslip-flowers, of each half a peck; rosemary-flowers, a quarter of a peck; hartshorn, two ounces; juniper berries, one *dram;* chive roots, one ounce; comfrey roots, sliced; anniseeds, fennel-seeds, caraway-seeds, nutmegs, ginger, cinnamon, pepper, spikenards, parsley-seeds, cloves and mace; aromaticum rosarum, three drams; sassafras sliced, half an ounce; alecampane roots, melilot flowers, calamus aromaticus, cardamums, lignum vitæ, aloes, rhubarb, sliced thin. Galengal, veronica, lodenicum; of these each two drams; acer bezoar, thirty grains; musk, twenty-four grains; ambergris, twenty grains; flour of coral, two drams; flour of amber, two drams; flour of pearl, two drams; *half a book of leaf gold;* saffron in a little bag, two drams; white sugar-candy, one pound. Wash the herbs, and swing them in a cloth till dry: in the midst of the herbs put the seeds, spices, and drugs; which being bruised, then put the whole to steep in as much rich sherry sack of the best as will cover them. Distill them in an alembic, and pour the water into quart bottles. There never was a better cordial in cases of illness: two or three spoonfuls will almost revive from death."

Long live my Lady Hewit! Four of the giants of old could scarcely do more than shake that enormous bundle of herbs in the mainsail of a modern man-of-war! One may imagine the bustle and importance of concocting this cordial; the number of maidens picking the herbs; the housekeeper, or perchance the family apothecary, selecting and compounding the drugs; the perfume and aroma of this splendid and right royal ceremony. Dr. Stevens's water, my Lady Allen's water, and aqua mirabilis, all deserve to be recorded; but I think my Lady Hewit's recipe the most various and imaginative.

After Lady Hewit, one small dose of Nicholas Culpepper, and I have done. It is extracted from "The English Physitian, with three hundred and sixty and nine medicines made of English herbs that were not in any impression until this; being an Astrologico-physical Discourse of the vulgar herbs of this nation; containing the complete method of preserving health, or cure himself being ill, for three-pence charge, with such things only as grow in England, they being most fit for English bodies. By Nicholas Culpepper, Gent., Student in Physic and Astrology. London: printed for Peter Cole, at the sign of the Printing Press in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange. 1654."

N. B. This elaborate treatise was a posthumous work,—one, as appears from a most curious prefatory epistle by Mrs. Alice Culpepper, the relict of Nicholas,—"one out of seventy-nine books of his own making and translating, left on her hands and deposited into the hand of his and her much honoured friend Mr. Peter Cole, bookseller, at the Printing Press, near the Royal Exchange, from whom they may be expected in print at due season. Also her husband left seventeen other books completely perfected in the hand of the said Mr. Cole, for which he paid her husband in his life-time." [Jewel of a bookseller! Alas, that the race should be extinct!] "And Mr. Cole is ready and willing (on any good occasion) to show any of the said seventy-nine books, or the seventeen, to such as doubt thereof."—Inestimable Peter Cole! if he could but have communicated his faith in Nicholas Culpepper to his customers, he would have made a better bargain. I wonder how many of the said seventy-nine books or of the seventeen ever were printed? and, if printed, how many were sold? and what the size and weight of the MSS. might be altogether?—whether one wagon would hold the huge ponderosities? or whether they would require two?

I must now, however, give a brief specimen of Nicholas's astrologico-physical treatise,—a short sample it must be, for a collection of the "Beauties of Culpepper" would be as tedious in this duodecimo age as one of his own heaviest volumes. Thus adviseth Nicholas:

"Keep your head outwardly warm. Accustom yourself to smell hot herbs. Take a pill that heats the head at night going to bed. In the morning a decoction that cools the liver.—You must not think, courteous people, that I can spend my time in giving you examples of all diseases. These are enough to let you see as much light as you can receive without hurt. If I should set you to look upon the sun of my knowledge, you would be dazzled.

"To such as study astrology (who are the only men I know fit to study physick), (physick without astrology being like a lamp without oyl), you are the men I exceedingly respect; and such documents as my brain can give you (being at present absent from my study), I shall give you, and an example to show the proof.

"Fortifie the body with herbs of the nature of the Lord of the Ascendant; 'tis no matter whether he be fortune or infortune in this case. Let your medicine be something anti-pathetical to the Lord of the Sixth. Let your medicine be something of the nature of the sign ascending. If the Lord of the Tenth be strong, make use of *his* medicine. If this cannot well be, make use of the medicines of the light of time. Be sure alwaies to fortifie the grieved part of the body by sympathetic remedies. Regard the heart. Keep it upon the wheels, because the sun is the fountain of life, and *therefore* those universal remedies aurum potabile and the philosopher's stone cure all diseases by fortifying the heart."

He says of the vine: "It is a most gallant tree, very sympathetical with the body of man." Of the willow: "The moon owns it, and being a fine cool tree, the branches of it are very convenient to be placed in the chamber of one sick of fever." Of "wood*bind*, or honeysuckles: the celestial Crab claims it. It is fitting a conserve made of the flowers of it were in every gentlewoman's house: for if the lungs be afflicted by Jupiter, this is your cure."

Also, he saith: "If I were to tell a long story of medicines working by sympathy or antipathy, ye would not understand one word of it. They that are fit to make physitians will find it in my treatise." [Query—One of the seventy-nine? or of the seventeen?—the paid, or unpaid wisdom?] "All modern physitians know not what belongs to a sympathetical cure, no more than a cuckoo knows what belongs to sharps and flats in musick; but follow the vulgar road and call it a hidden quality, because it is hid from the eyes of dunces:—and indeed none but astrologers can give reason for it,—and phisic without reason is like a pudding without fat," quoth Nicholas Culpepper.

Finally, he says—"He that reads this and understands what he reads, hath a jewel more worth than a diamond. This shall live when I am dead; and thus I leave it to the world, not caring a halfpenny whether they like it or dislike it. The grave equals all men; therefore shall equal me with princes, until which time an eternal Providence is over me; then the ill tongue of a prattling priest, or one who hath more tongue than wit, more pride than honesty, shall never trouble me."

THE SURGEON'S COURTSHIP.

It seems rather paradoxical to say that a place noted for good air should be favourable to the increase and prosperity of the medical tribe; nevertheless the fact is so, certainly in this particular instance, and I suspect in many others: and when the causes are looked into, the circumstance will seem less astonishing than it appears at the first glance,—a good air being, as we all know, the *pis aller* of the physician, the place to which, when the resources of his art are exhausted, he sends his patients to recover or die, as it may happen. Sometimes they really do recover, especially if in leaving their medical attendant they also leave off medicine; but for the most part, poor things! they die just as certainly as they would have done if they had stayed at home, only that the sands run a little more rapidly in consequence of the glass being shaken: and this latter catastrophe is particularly frequent in Belford, whose much-vaunted air being, notwithstanding its vicinity to a great river, keen, dry, and bracing, is excellently adapted for preserving health in the healthy, but very unfit for the delicate lungs of an invalid.

The place, however, has a name for salubrity; and, as sick people continue to resort to it in hopes of getting well, there is of course no lack of doctors to see them through the disease with proper decorum, cure them if they can, or let them die if so it must be. There is no lack of doctors, and still less is there a lack of skill; for although the air of Belford may be overrated, there is no mistake in the report which assigns to the medical men of the town singular kindness, attention and ability.

Thirty years ago these high professional qualities were apt to be alloyed by the mixture of a little professional peculiarity in dress and pedantry in manner. The faculty had not in those days completely dropped "the gold-headed cane;" and, in provincial towns especially, the physician was almost as distinguishable by the cut of his clothes as the clergyman by his shovel-crowned hat, or the officer by his uniform.

The two principal physicians of Belford at this period were notable exemplifications of medical costume—each might have sat for the picture of an M. D. The senior, and perhaps the more celebrated of the two, was a short, neat old gentleman, of exceedingly small proportions, somewhat withered and shrivelled, but almost as fair, and delicate, and carefully preserved, as if he had himself been of that sex of which he was the especial favourite—an old lady in his own person. His dress was constantly a tight stock, shoes with buckles, brown silk stockings, and a full suit of drab; the kid gloves, with which his wrinkled white hands were at once adorned and preserved, were of the same sober hue; and the shining bob-wig, which covered no common degree of intellect and knowledge, approached as nearly to the colour of the rest of his apparel as the difference of material would admit. His liveries might have been cut from the same piece with his own coat, and the chariot, in which he might be computed to pass one third of his time, (for he would as soon have dreamt of flying as of walking to visit his next-door neighbour,) was of a similar complexion. Such was the outer man of the shrewd and sensible Dr. Littleton. Add, that he loved a rubber, and that his manner was a little prim, a little quaint, and a little fidgety, and the portrait of the good old man will be complete.

His competitor, Dr. Granville, would have made four of Dr. Littleton, if cut into quarters. He was a tall, large, raw-boned man, who looked like a North Briton, and I believe actually came from that country, so famous for great physicians. His costume was invariably black, surmounted by a powdered head

and a pigtail, which (for the doctor was a single man, and considered as a *très-bon parti* by the belles of the town) occasioned no inconsiderable number of disputes amongst the genteeler circles; some of his fair patients asserting that the powdered foretop was no other than a tie-wig, whilst the opposite party maintained that it was his own hair.

However this may be, Dr. Littleton's chestnut-coloured bob and Dr. Granville's powdered pigtail set the fashion amongst the inferior practitioners. From the dear old family apothecary—the kind and good old man, beloved even by the children whom he physicked, and regarded by the parents as one of their most valued friends—to the pert parish doctor, whom Crabbe has described so well, "all pride and business, bustle and conceit;" from the top to the bottom of the profession, every medical man in Belford wore a bob-wig or a pigtail. It was as necessary a preliminary to feeling a pulse, or writing a prescription, as a diploma; and to have cured a patient without the regular official decoration would have been a breach of decorum that nothing could excuse. Nay, so long did the prejudice last, that when some dozen years afterwards three several adventurers tried their fortune in the medical line at Belford, their respective failures were universally attributed to the absence of the proper costume; though the first was a prating fop, who relied entirely on calomel and the depleting system—an English Sangrado!—the second, a solemn coxcomb, who built altogether on stimulants—gave brandy in apoplexies, and sent his patients, persons who had always lived soberly, tipsy out of the world; and the third, a scientific Jack-of-all-trades, who passed his days in catching butterflies and stuffing birds* for his museum, examining strata, and analyzing springs—detecting Cheltenham in one, *Barèges* in another, fancying some new-fangled chalybeate in the rusty scum of a third, and writing books on them all—whilst his business, such as it was, was left to take care of itself. To my fancy, the inside of these heads might very well account for the non-success of their proprietors; nevertheless, the good inhabitants of Belford obstinately referred their failure to the want of bob-wigs, pigtails, and hair-powder.

Now, however, times are altered—altered even in Belford itself. Dr. Littleton and Dr. Granville repose with their patients in the church-yard of St. Nicholas, and their costumes are gone to the tomb of the Capulets.

Of a truth, all professional distinctions in dress are rapidly wearing away. Uniforms, it is true, still exist; but, except upon absolute duty, are seldom exhibited: and who, except my venerable friend the Rector of Hadley, ever thinks of wearing a shovel-hat?

Amongst medical practitioners especially, all peculiarities, whether of equipage or apparel, are completely gone by. The chariot is no more necessary, except as a matter of convenience, than the gold-headed cane or the bob-wig; and our excellent friend Dr. Chard may, as it suits him, walk in the town, or ride on horseback, or drive his light open carriage in the country, without in the slightest degree impugning his high reputation, or risking his extensive practice; whilst the most skilful surgeon in Belford may be, and actually is, with equal impunity the greatest beau in the place.

There are not many handsomer or more agreeable men than Mr. Edward Foster, who—the grandson by his mother's side of good old Dr. Littleton, and by his father's of the venerable apothecary, so long his friend and contemporary, and combining considerable natural talent with a first-rate scientific education—stepped, as by hereditary right, into the first connexion in Belford and its populous and opulent neighbourhood, and became almost immediately the leading surgeon of the town.

Skilful, accomplished, clever, kind,—possessing, besides his professional emoluments, an easy private fortune, and living with a very agreeable single sister in one of the best houses of the place,—Edward Foster, to say nothing of his good looks, seemed to combine within himself all the elements of popularity. His good looks too were of the best sort, resulting from a fine, manly, graceful figure, and an open, intelligent countenance, radiant with good-humour and vivacity. And very popular Edward Foster was. He had but one fault, so far as I could hear, and that was an inaptitude to fall in love. In vain did grave mammas sagely hint that a professional man could not expect to succeed unless married; in vain did jocular papas laughingly ask, how he would manage when Mr. Lyons, the young banker, had stolen his sister for a wife? Edward Foster did not marry, and did succeed; and Miss Foster became Mrs. Lyons, and the house went on as well as ever. Even the young ladies condescended as much as young ladies ought to condescend, but still Edward Foster was obdurate; and the gossips of Belford began to suspect that the heart which appeared so invulnerable must have been protected by some distant and probably too ambitious attachment from the charms of their fair townswomen, and even proceeded to make inquiries as to the daughters of the various noble families that he attended in the neighbourhood.

Time solved the enigma; and the solution, as often happens in these cases, lay in a spot wholly unsuspected by the parties interested.

Few things are more melancholy and yet few more beautifully picturesque than the grounds of some fine old place deserted by

* Vide the note at the end of this story.

its owners, and either wholly pulled down, or converted to the coarse and common purposes of a farm-steading. We have many such places in our neighbourhood, where the estates (as is usually the case in all the counties within fifty miles of London) have either entirely passed away from their old proprietors, or have been so much dismembered by the repeated purchases of less ancient but more opulent settlers on the land, that the residence has gradually become too expensive for the diminished rent-roll; and, abandoned, probably not without considerable heart-yearning, by the owner, has been insensibly suffered to moulder away, an antedated and untimely ruin, or been degraded to the vulgar uses of a farmhouse.

One of the most beautiful of these relics of old English magnificence is the Court-house at Allonby, which has been desecrated in all manner of ways; first wholly deserted, then in great measure dismantled, then partly taken down, and what remained of the main building — what *would* remain, for the admirable old masonry offered every sort of passive resistance to the sacrilegious tools and engines of the workmen employed in the wicked task of demolition, and was as difficult to be pulled down as a rock — the remains, mutilated and disfigured as they were, still further disfigured by being fitted up as a dwelling for the farmer who rented the park; whilst the fine old stables, coach-houses, and riding-houses were appropriated to the basest uses of a farmyard. I wonder that the pigs and cows, when they looked at the magnificence about them, the lordly crest (a deer couchant) placed over the noble arched gateways, and on the solid pillars at the corners of the walls, and the date 1646, which with the name of the first proprietor "Andrew Montfalcon" surmounted all the Gothic doors, were not ashamed of their own unfitness for so superb a habitation.

Allonby Court was one of the finest specimens of an old manorial residence that had ever come under my observation. Built at the period when castellated mansions were no longer required for defence, it yet combined much of their solidity and massiveness with far more of richness, of ornament, and even of extent, than was compatible with the main purpose of those domestic fortresses, in which beauty and convenience were alike sacrificed to a jealous enclosure of walls and ramparts.

Allonby had been erected by one of the magnificent courtiers of a magnificent era — the end of Elizabeth's reign and the beginning of that of James; and its picturesque portal, its deep bay windows, its clustered chimneys, its hall where a coach and six might have paraded, and its oaken staircase, upon which a similar equipage might with all convenience have driven, were even surpassed in grandeur and beauty by the interior fittings up, — the splendour of the immense chimneypieces — the designs of the balustrades round the galleries—the carving of the cornices—the gilding of the panelled wainscoting, and the curious inlaying of its oaken floors. Twenty years ago it stood just as it must have been when Sir Andrew Montfalcon took possession of it. Tapestry, pictures, furniture, all were the same,—all had grown old together; and this entire and perfect keeping, this absolute absence of everything modern or new, gave a singular harmony to the scene. It was a venerable and most perfect model of its own distant day; and when an interested steward prevailed on a nonresident and indolent proprietor to consent to its demolition, there was a universal regret in the neighbourhood. Everybody felt glad to hear, that, so solidly had it been built, the sale of the materials did not defray the expense of pulling them down. So malicious did our love of the old place make us.

We felt the loss of that noble structure as a personal deprivation — and it was such; for the scenery of a country, the real and living landscape, is to all who have eyes to see and taste to relish its beauties an actual and most valuable property :—to enjoy is to possess.

Still, however, the remains of Allonby are strikingly picturesque. The single wing which is standing rises like a tower from the fragment of the half-demolished hall; and the brambles, briars, and ivies, which grow spontaneously amongst the ruins, mingle with the luxuriant branches of a vine which has been planted on the south side of the building, and wreathes its rich festoons above the gable-ends and round the clustered chimneys, veiling and adorning, as Nature in her bounty often does, the desolation caused by the hand of man. Gigantic forest-trees, oak, and elm, and beech, are scattered about the park, which still remains unenclosed and in pasture; a clear, bright river glides through it, from which on one side rises an abrupt grassy bank, surmounted by a majestic avenue of enormous firs and lime-trees, planted in two distinct rows; a chain of large fish-ponds, some of them dried up and filled with underwood, communicates with the stream; and flowering shrubs, the growth of centuries, laburnum, lilac, laurel, double cherry, and double peach, are clustered in gay profusion around the mouldering grottoes and ruined temples with which the grounds had been adorned.

The most beautiful and most perfect of these edifices was a high, tower-like fishing-room, overhanging the river, of which indeed the lower part formed a boat-house, covered with honeysuckle, jessamine, and other creeping plants, backed by tall columnar poplars, and looking on one side into a perfect grove of cypress and cedar. A flaunting musk-rose grew on one side of the steps, and a Portugal laurel on the other; whilst a moss-grown sun-

dial at a little distance rose amidst a thicket of roses, lilies, and hollyhocks, (relics of an old flower-garden,) the very emblem of the days that were gone,—a silent but most eloquent sermon on the instability of human affairs.

This romantic and somewhat melancholy dwelling was inhabited by a couple as remote from all tinge of romance, or of sadness, as ever were brought together in this world of vivid contrast. Light and shadow were not more opposite than were John and Martha Clewer to their gloomy habitation.

John Clewer and his good wife Martha were two persons whom I can with all truth and convenience describe conjointly in almost the same words, as not unfrequently happens with a married couple in their rank of life. They were a stout, comely, jolly, good-natured pair, in the prime of life, who had married early, and had grown plump, ruddy, and hardy under the influence of ten years of changing seasons and unchanging industry. Poor they were, in spite of his following the triple calling of miller, farmer, and gamekeeper, and her doing her best to aid him by baking and selling in the form of bread the corn which he not only grew but ground, and defiling the faded grandeur of the court by the vulgarities of cheese, red-herrings, eggs, candles, and onions, and the thousand-and-one nuisances which composed the *omnibus* concern called a village shop. Martha's home-baked loaves were reckoned the best in the county, and John's farming was scarcely less celebrated: nevertheless, they were poor; a fact which might partly be accounted for by the circumstance of their ten years' marriage having produced eight children, and partly by their being both singularly liberal, disinterested, and generous. If a poor man brought the produce of his children's gleanings to John's mill, he was sure not only to get it ground for nothing, but to receive himself at the hands of the good miller as plentiful a meal of beef or bacon, and as brimming a cup of strong ale, as ever was doled out of the old buttery; whilst Martha, who was just John himself in petticoats, and in whom hospitality took the feminine form of charity, could never send away the poorest of her customers (in other words, her debtors) empty-handed, however sure she might be that the day of payment would never arrive until the day of judgment. Rich our good couple certainly were not,—unless the universal love and goodwill of the whole neighbourhood may count for riches; but content most assuredly they were,—ay, and more than content! If I were asked to name the happiest and merriest persons of my acquaintance, I think it would be John and Martha Clewer.

With all their resemblance, there was between this honest country couple one remarkable difference: the husband was a man of fair common sense, plain and simple-minded, whilst his wife had ingrafted on an equal artlessness and *naïveté* of manner a degree of acuteness of perception and shrewdness of remark, which rendered her one of the most amusing companions in the country, and, added to her excellences as a baker, had no small effect in alluring to her shop the few customers whose regular payments enabled her to bear up against the many who never paid at all. For my own part,—who am somewhat of a character-studier by profession, and so complete a bread-fancier that every day in the week shall have its separate loaf, from the snowy French roll of Monday to the unsifted home-made of Saturday at e'en,—I had a double motive for frequenting Martha's bake-house, at which I had been for some years a most punctual visiter and purchaser until last spring and summer, when first a long absence, then a series of honoured guests, then the pressure of engrossing operations, then the weather, then the roads, and at last the having broken through the habit of going thither, kept me for many months from my old and favourite haunt, the venerable Court.

So long had been my absence, that the hedge-rows, in which the woodbine was at my last visit just putting forth its hardy bluish leaves, and the alder making its earliest shoots, were now taking their deepest and dingiest hue, enlivened only by garlands of the traveller's joy, the briony, and the wild-vetch; that the lowly primrose and the creeping violet were succeeded by the tall mallows and St. John's worts, and the half-seeded stalks of the foxglove; and that the beans, which the women and girls were then planting, men and boys were now about to cut: in a word, the budding spring was succeeded by the ripe and plenteous autumn, when, on a lovely harvest afternoon, I at length revisited Allonby.

The day, although exquisitely pleasant, had been rather soft than bright, and was now closing in with that magical effect of the evening light which lends a grace to the commonest objects, and heightens in an almost incredible degree the beauty of those which are already beautiful. Flowers are never so glorious as in the illusive half-hour which succeeds the setting of the sun; it is at that period, that a really fine piece of natural scenery is seen to most advantage. I paused for a moment before entering Martha's territory, the shop, to look at the romantic grounds of Allonby, all the more picturesque from their untrained wildness; and on the turfy terrace beyond the fishing-house, and just at the entrance of that dark avenue of leafy lime-trees and firs, whose huge straight stems shone with a subdued and changeful splendour, now of a purplish hue, and now like dimmer brass,—just underneath the two foremost trees, strongly relieved by the deep

shadow, stood a female figure, graceful and perfect as ever was fancied by poet or modelled by sculptor. Her white dress had all the effect of drapery, and her pure and colourless complexion, her flaxen ringlets almost as pale as the swan-like neck around which they fell, her fair hand shading her eyes, and the fixed attention of her attitude as she stood watching some of Martha's children at play upon the grass, gave her more the look of an alabaster statue than of a living breathing woman. I never saw grace so unconscious yet so perfect: I stood almost as still as herself to look on her, until she broke, or I should rather say changed the spell, by walking forward to the children, and added the charm of motion to that of symmetry. I then turned to Martha, who was watching my absorbed attention with evident amusement, and, without giving me time to ask any questions, answered my thoughts by an immediate exclamation: "Ah, ma'am, I knew you'd like to look at Lucy Charlton! Many a time I've said to my master, 'Tis a pity that madam has not seen our Lucy! she'd be so sure to take a fancy to her!' And now she's going away, poor thing! That's the way things fall out, after the time, as one may say. I knew she'd take your fancy."

"Her name is Lucy Charlton, then?" replied I, still riveting my eyes on the lovely, airy creature before me, who, shaking back the ringlets from her fair face with a motion of almost infantine playfulness, was skimming along the bank to meet the rosy, laughing, children.—"And who may Lucy Charlton be?"

"Why, you see, ma'am, her mother was my husband's first cousin. She lived with old Lady Lynnere as housekeeper, and married the butler; and this is the only child. Both father and mother died, poor thing! before she was four years old, and Lady Lynnere brought her up quite like a lady herself; but now she is dead, and dead without a will, and her relations have seized all, and poor Lucy is come back to her friends. But she won't stay with them, though," pursued Mrs. Clewer, half testily; "she's too proud to be wise; and instead of staying with me and teaching my little girls to sew samplers, she's going to be a tutoress in some foreign parts beyond the sea—Russia I think they call the place—going to some people whom Lady Lynnere knew, who are to give her a salary, and so hinder her from being a burthen to her relations, as she's goose enough to say—as if we could feel her little expenses; or, say we did—as if we would not rather go with half a meal than part with her, sweet creature as she is! and to go to that cold country and come back half frozen, or die there and never come back at all! Howsomever," continued Martha, "it's no use bemoaning ourselves now; the matter's settled—her clothes are all aboard ship, her passage taken, and I'm to drive her to Portsmouth in our little shay-cart to-morrow morning. A sorrowful parting 't will be for her and the poor children, merry as she is trying to seem at this minute. I dare say we shall never see her again, for she is but delicate, and there's no putting old heads upon young shoulders; so instead of buying good warm stuffs and flannels, cloth cloaks and such things to fence her pretty dear self against the cold, she has laid out her little money in light summer gear, as if she was going to stay in England and be married this very harvest: and now she'll go abroad and catch her death, and we shall never set eyes on her again." And the tears, which during her whole speech had stood in Martha's eyes, fairly began to fall.

"Oh, Mrs. Clewer! you must not add to the natural pain of parting by such a fancy as that; your pretty cousin seems slight and delicate, but not unhealthy. What should make you suppose her so?"

"Why, ma'am, our young doctor, Mr. Edward Foster, (you know how clever he is!) was attending my master this spring for the rheumatism, just after Lucy came here. She had a sad cough, poor thing! when she first arrived, caught by sitting up o'nights with old Lady Lynnere; and Mr. Edward said she was a tender plant and required nursing herself. He came to see her every day for two months, and quite set her up, and would not take a farthing for his pains; and I did think—and so did my master, after I told him—— But, howsomever, that's all over now, and she's going away to-morrow morning."

"What did you think?" inquired I, amused to find Edward Foster's affections the subject of speculation in Mrs. Clewer's rank of life,—"what did you say you thought of Mr. Foster, Martha?"

"Why to be sure, ma'am—people can't help their thoughts, you know,—and it did seem to me that he fancied her."

"You mean to say that you think Mr. Edward Foster liked your young relation—was in love with her?"

"To be sure I do, ma'am,—at least I did," continued Martha, correcting herself; "and so did my master, and so would anybody. He that has so much business used to come here every day, and stay two hours at a time, when, except for the pleasure of talking to her, there was no more need of his coming to Lucy than of his coming to me. Every day of his life he used to come; his very horse knew the place, and used to stop at the gate as natural as our old mare."

"And when she got well, did he leave off coming?"

"No, no! he came still, but not so often. He seemed not to know his own mind, and kept on dilly-dally, shilly-shally, and the poor thing pined and fretted, as I could see that

was watching her, though she never said a word to me of the matter, nor I to her; and then this offer to go to Russia came, and she accepted it, I do verily believe, partly to get as far from him as she could. Ah! well-a-day, it's a sad thing when young gentlemen don't know their own minds!" sighed the tender-hearted Mrs. Clewer; "they don't know the grief they're causing!"

"What did he say when he heard she was going abroad?" asked I. "That intelligence might have made him acquainted with the state of his own affections."

"Lackaday, ma'am!" exclaimed Martha, on whom a sudden ray of light seemed to have broken, "so it might! and I verily believe that to this hour he knows nothing of the matter! What a pity there's not a little more time! The ship sails on Saturday, and this is Thursday night! Let's look at the letter," pursued Martha, diving into her huge pockets. "I'm sure it said the ship, Roebuck, sailed on Saturday morning. Where can the letter be!" exclaimed Martha, after an unsuccessful hunt amidst the pincushions, needle-books, thread-cases, scissors, handkerchiefs, gloves, mittens, purses, thimbles, primers, tops, apples, buns, and pieces of gingerbread, with which her pockets were loaded, and making an especial search amongst divers odd-looking notes and memorandums, which the said receptacles contained. "Where can the letter be? Fetch your father, Dolly! Saddle the grey mare, Jem! I am going to have the toothache, and must see Mr. Foster directly. Tell Lucy I want to speak to her, Tom!—No; she shall know nothing about it—don't." And with these several directions to some of the elder children, who were by this time crowding about her, Martha bustled off, with her handkerchief held to her face, in total forgetfulness of myself, and of the loaf, which I had paid for but not received; and after vainly waiting for a few minutes, during which I got a nearer view of the elegant Lucy, and thought within myself how handsome a couple she and Mr. Foster would have made, and perhaps might still make, with admiration of her gracefulness, pity for her sorrows, and interest in her fate, I mounted my pony phaeton and took my departure.

The next morning Martha, in her shay-cart, (as she called her equipage,) appeared at our door, like an honest woman, with my loaf and a thousand apologies. Her face was tied up, as is usual in cases of toothache, and, though she did not, on narrow observation, look as if much ailed her,—for her whole comely face was radiant with happiness,—I thought it only courteous to ask what was the matter.

"Lord love you, ma'am, nothing!" quoth Martha; "only after you went away I rummaged out the letter, and found that the Roebuck did sail on Saturday as I thought, and that if I meant to take your kind hint, no time was to be lost. So I had the toothache immediately, and sent my master to fetch the doctor. It was lucky his being a doctor, because one always can send for them at a minute's warning, as one may say. So I sent for Mr. Edward to cure my toothache, and told him the news."

"And did he draw your tooth, Martha?"

"Heaven help him! not he! he never said a word about me or my aches, but was off like a shot to find Lucy, who was rambling about somewhere in the moonlight to take a last look of the old grounds. And it's quite remarkable how little time these matters take; for when I went out for a bit of a stroll half an hour afterwards, to see how the land lay, I came bolt upon them by accident, and found that he had popped the question, that she had accepted him, and that the whole affair was as completely settled as if it had been six months about. So Lucy stays to be married; and I am going in my shay-cart to fetch her trunks and boxes from Portsmouth. No need to fling them away, though we must lose the passage-money, I suppose; for all her silks and muslins, and trinkum-trankums, which I found so much fault with, will be just the thing for the wedding! To think how things come round!" added Martha. "And what a handy thing the toothache is sometimes! I don't think there's a happier person anywhere than I am at this minute,—except, perhaps, Lucy and Mr. Edward; and they are walking about making love under the fir-trees in the park."

And off she drove, a complete illustration of Prospero's feeling, though expressed in such different words:

> So glad of this, as they, I cannot be,
> ——————but my rejoicing
> At nothing can be more.

Note.—Birds are beautiful creatures, and ornithology is a delightful study; only that nine times out of ten the stuffed birds in a museum lose much of their beauty and almost all their character,—to say nothing of the room which they take up, and the exceeding expense and trouble attending the pursuit. A far better plan was that of my excellent old friend Sir William Elford, who turned his fine talent for painting to the service of his favourite study,—natural history, and has accumulated above one hundred coloured drawings of indigenous birds, or birds of passage, all taken from the life, in natural attitudes, and mostly of the natural size, perched on such trees and backed by such landscapes as those amongst which they are generally found,—forming, in short, a correct representation of the bird and its habits. The occupations of a busy life have prevented the completion of this design, which I mention in the hope that other naturalists may be induced to carry a similar plan into execution. I cannot name Sir William Elford without paying a brief and passing tribute to my dear and venerable friend, who, now in the eighty-fifth year of his age, carries his faculties undimmed and unbroken,—is still the painter, the naturalist, the musician, the poet, the man of taste, the man of business, and most eminently the man of *letters*. Never since that prince of correspondents, Horace Walpole, was letter-writer

so shrewd, so pleasant, so playful, and so humorous, as my excellent friend. And I speak from full experience; for, since the days of my early girlhood, when he had the kind condescension to devote his valuable time and his delightful powers to my amusement and improvement, we have been close and constant correspondents. Long may we continue so! Long, very long, may he remain as he is now, the life of the social circle, and the pride and comfort of his amiable family!

THE IRISH HAYMAKER.

That our county stands right in the way from Ireland to London, and of consequence from London back again to Ireland, is a fact well known, not only to our Justices of the Peace in Quarter Session assembled, but also to the Commons House of Parliament; the aforesaid county, always a very needy personage, having been so nearly ruined by the cost of passing the Irish paupers home to their own country, that a bill is actually before the Legislature to relieve the local rates from the expense of this novel species of transportation, and provide a separate fund for the transmittal of that wretched class of homeless poor from the metropolis to Bristol, and from Bristol across the Channel.

But, besides these unfortunate absentees, whose propensity to rove abroad in imitation of their betters occasions so much trouble to overseers, and police-officers, and mayors of towns, and Magistrates at Quarter Sessions, and, finally, to the two Houses of Lords and Commons,—besides this most miserable race of vagrants, there are two other sets of Irish wanderers with whom we are from our peculiar position sufficiently familiar — pig-drivers and haymakers.

Of the first, we in the country, who live amongst the by-ways of the world, see much; whilst the inhabitants of Belford, folks who dwell amidst highways and turnpikes, know as little either of the pigs or their drivers, until they see the former served up at table in the shape of ham or bacon, as if they lived at Timbuctoo; inasmuch as these Irish swine people, partly to avoid the hard road, partly to save the tolls, invariably choose a far more intricate track, leading through chains of downs and commons, and back lanes, some of turf and some of mud, (which they plough up after a fashion that makes our parish Macadamizers half crazy,) until they finally reach the metropolis by a route that would puzzle the mapmakers, but which is nevertheless almost as direct and nearly as lawless as that pursued by a different class of bipeds and quadrupeds in that fashionable way of breaking bones called a steeple-chase.

Few things are more forlorn in appearance than these Irish droves, weary and footsore, and adding the stain of every soil they have passed through since their landing to their large original stock of native dirt and ugliness. English pigs are ugly and dirty enough, Heaven knows! but then the creatures have a look of lazy, slovenly enjoyment about them; they are generally fat and always idle, and for the most part (except when ringing or killing, or when turned by main force out of some garden or harvest-field) contrive to lead as easy lives, and to have as much their own way in the world, as any set of animals with whom one is acquainted: so that, unsightly as they are, there is no unpleasant feeling in looking at them, forming as they do the usual appendage to the busy farm or the tidy cottage. But these poor brutes from over the water are a misery to see; gaunt and long, and shambling, almost as different in make from our English pig as a greyhound from a pointer, dragging one weary limb after the other, with an expression of fretful suffering which, as one cannot relieve, one gets away from as soon as possible. Even their halts hardly seem to improve their condition: hungry though they be, they are too tired to eat.

So far as personal appearance goes, there is no small resemblance between the droves and the drovers. Just as long, as gaunt, and as shambling as the Irish pigs, are the Irish boys (*Anglicè*, men) who drive them; with the same slow lounging gait, and, between the sallow skin, the sunburnt hair, and the brown frieze great-coat, of nearly the same dirty complexion. There, however, the likeness ceases. The Irish drover is as remarkable for good-humour, good spirits, hardihood, and light-heartedness, as his countryman, the pig, is for the contrary properties of peevishness and melancholy, and exhaustion and fatigue. He goes along the road from stage to stage, from alehouse to alehouse, scattering jokes and compliments, to the despair of our duller clowns and the admiration of our laughing maidens. They even waste their repartees on one another, as the following anecdote will show:—

A friend of mine, passing a public-house about a mile off, well known as the Church-house of Aberleigh, saw two drovers leaning against the stile leading into the church-yard, whilst their weary charge was reposing in the highway. The sign of the Six Bells had of course suggested a practical commentary on the Beer-bill. "Christy," says one, with the frothy mug at his lips, "here's luck to us!" —"Ay, Pat," drily replied his companion, "pot luck!"

Our business, however, is with the haymakers, a far more diversified race, inasmuch as Irish people of all classes and ages, if they can but raise money for their passage, are occasionally tempted over to try their fortune in the English harvest.

The first of these adventurers known at Belford was a certain Corny Sullivan, who had twenty years ago the luck to be engaged as a haymaker at Denham Park, which, in

spite of its spacious demesne, its lodges, and its avenue, is actually within the precincts of the Borough. Now the owner of Denham, being one of the kindest persons in the world, was especially good to the poor Irishman,—allowed him a barn full of clean straw for his lodging, and potatoes and buttermilk at discretion for his board,—so that Corny was enabled to carry home nearly the whole of his earnings to "the wife and the childer;" and, having testified his gratitude to his generous benefactor by bringing the ensuing season a pocketful of seed potatoes,*—such potatoes as never before were grown upon English ground,—has ever since been accounted a great public benefactor; the potatoes—"rale blacks," Corny calls them (I suppose because they are red)—having been very generally diffused by their liberal possessor.

Along with the "rale blacks" Corny brought a brother haymaker, Tim Murphy by name, who shared his barn, his allowance of buttermilk, and his dole of potatoes and more than partook of his popularity. Corney was an oldish-looking hollow-eyed man, with a heavy slinging gait, a sallowish, yellowish complexion, a red wig much the worse for wear, and a long frieze coat, once grey, fastened at the neck by a skewer, with the vacant sleeves hanging by his side as if he had lost both his arms. His English, (though he was said "to have beautiful Irish") was rather perplexing than amusing; and, upon the whole, he was so harmless and inoffensive,—so *quite*, as he himself would have phrased it,—that Mary Marshall, the straw-hat-maker in Bristol-street, who, on the first rumour of an Irish-haymaker, had taken a walk to Denham to see how Sally the housemaid liked a bonnet which she had turned for her, was heard to declare that, but for the wig and the big coat, the man was just like another man, and not worth crossing the road to look after.

Tim Murphy was another guess sort of person. Tall, athletic, active, and strong, with a bright blue eye, a fair yet manly complexion, high features, a resolute open countenance, and a head of curling brown hair, it would have been difficult to select a finer specimen of a young and spirited Irishman; whilst his good-humour, his cheerfulness, the promptitude with which he put forth his strength, whether in work or play, (for at the harvest-home supper he danced down two Scotchwomen and outsang a Bavarian broom-girl) and, added to these accomplishments, his decided turn for gallantry, and the abundance and felicity of his compliments, rendered him a favourite with high and low.

The lasses, above all, were his devoted admirers; and so skilfully had he contrived to divide his attentions, that when, declining to return to Ireland with his comrade at the end of the hay season, he lingered, first for the harvest, then for the after-math, and lastly for the potato-digging, not only the housemaid and the kitchenmaid at the Park, but Harriet Bridges the gardener's daughter, and Susan Stock of the Lodge, openly imputed his detention in England to the power of her own peculiar charms.

Whether the damsels were actually and actively deceived by the honeyed words of this Lothario of the Emerald Isle, or whether he merely allowed them to deceive themselves, and was only passively guilty, I do not pretend to determine—far less do I undertake to defend him. On the contrary, I hold the gentleman to have been in either case a most indefensible flirt, since it was morally impossible but three at least of the unhappy quartet must be doomed to undergo the pangs of disappointed love. I am sorry to say, that Tim Murphy was far from seeing this in a proper point of view.

"Arrah, Mrs. Cotton, dear!" (said he to the house-keeper at Denham when lecturing him on turning the maidens' heads, especially the two under her management,)—"Arrah now, what am I to do? Sure you would not have a man marry four wives at oncet, barring he were a Turk or a blackamore! But if you can bring the faymales to 'gree, so as to toss up heads or tails, or draw lots as to which shall be the woman that owns me, and then to die off, one afther another, mind you, according to law, why I'm the boy for 'em all—and bad luck to the hindermost! Only let them meet and settle the matter in pace and *quiteness*, barring scratching and fighting, and I'll come at a whistle."

And off he walked, humming "Garryowen," leaving Mrs. Cotton rather more provoked than it suited her dignity to acknowledge.

About this time,—that is to say, on a Saturday afternoon towards the middle of November,—Mary Marshall and Mrs. Drake, the widowed aunt with whom she lived, were sitting over their tea in a room no bigger than a closet, behind a little milliner's shop in one of the smallest houses in Bristol-street. Tiny as the shop was, the window was still too large for the stock with which it was set forth; consisting of two or three bonnets belonging to Mary's business, and two or three caps, with half-a-dozen frills and collars, and a few balls

* It is delightful to see the gratitude of these poor people. A lady in this neighbourhood was very kind to one of them, who was taken ill on his way homeward. The next year he called on her again, with his wife, who was suffering under an ague, brought probably from their own desolate cabin. They had been in great want during the journey, destitute alike of food and medicine and needful clothing; nevertheless, he produced a little bottle of poteen, which he had brought all the way from his home, as an offering to the person who had been so good to him, and which neither his own wants nor his wife's sickness had induced him to touch. It was even with some difficulty that the lady, much pleased by the simplicity of his gratitude, could induce him to accept of clothes and money,—"he was afraid," he said, "that she should think it was begging he was."

of cotton and pieces of tape, as Mrs. Drake's share of the concern: added to which, conspicuously placed in the centre pane, was a box of tooth-powder, a ghastly-looking row of false human teeth, and an explanatory card, informing the nobility and gentry of Belford and its vicinity that Doctor Joseph Vanderhagen, of Amsterdam, *odontist* to a round dozen of highnesses and high mightinesses, was for a limited period sojourning at Mrs. Drake's in Bristol-street, and would undertake to extract teeth in the most difficult cases without pain, or danger, or delay,—so that, as the announcement expresses it, "the operation should be in itself a pleasure,—and to furnish sets better than real, warranted to perform all the offices of articulation and mastication in an astonishing manner, for a sum so small as to surprise the most rigid economist."

Where Mrs. Drake contrived to put her lodgers might easily be matter of surprise to the best contriver; and indeed an ill-wishing neighbour, a rival at once in lodging and letting and millinery, maliciously suggested that they must needs sleep in her empty bandboxes. But the up-stair closets, which she was pleased to call her first floor, were of some celebrity in the town—to those in search of cheap and genteel apartments, on account of the moderate rent, the cleanliness, and the civil treatment; to the inhabitants and other observers, on account of the kind of persons whom they were accustomed to see there, and who were ordinarily itinerants of the most showy and notorious description. French stays and French shoes had alternately occupied the centre pane: and it had displayed, in quick succession, pattern-pictures by artists who undertook to teach drawing as expeditiously and with as little trouble as Doctor Vanderhagen drew teeth; and likenesses in profile, executed by painters to whom, without any disrespect, may be assigned the name of "The Black Masters," whose portraits rivalled in cheapness the false grinders of the *odontist*. She had accommodated a glass-spinner and his furnaces, a showman and his dancing-dogs, a wandering lecturer, a she-fortuneteller, a he-ventriloquist, and a vaulter on the tight rope. Her last inmates had been a fine flashy foreign couple, all dirt and tinsel, rags and trumpery, who called themselves Monsieur and Madame de Gourbillon, stuck a guitar and a flute in the window, and announced what they were pleased to call a "Musical Promenade" in the Town-hall. The name was ingeniously novel and mysterious, and *made fortune*, as our French neighbours say: and poor Mrs. Drake walked herself off her feet in accompanying Madame round the town to dispose of their tickets, and secure the money. When the night of the performance arrived, the worthy pair were found to have decamped. They left Bristol-street under pretence of going to meet an eminent singer, whom they expected, they said, by the London stage; and were afterwards discovered to have mounted the roof of a Bath coach bound to London, having contrived, under different pretences to remove their musical instruments and other goods and chattels; thus renewing the old hoax of the bottle-conjuror, at the expense of the weary audience, who were impatiently pacing the Town-hall—of two fiddlers, engaged for the purpose of completing the accompaniments—of the man who had engaged to furnish lights and refreshments—of poor Mrs. Drake, who, in addition to her bill for lodgings, had disbursed many small sums, in the way of provisions and other purchases, which she could ill afford to lose—and of her good-humoured niece Mary Marshall, whom Madame had not only cheated out of an expensive bonnet by buying that for which she never meant to pay, but had also defrauded of her best shawl in the way of borrowing.

"It was enough," as Mrs. Drake observed, "to warn her against harbouring foreigners in her house, as long as she lived. No painted Madames or Mounseers, with bobs in their ears, should cheat her again."

How it happened that, in the teeth of this wise resolution, the next tenant of the good widow's first floor should be Doctor Joseph Vanderhagen, was best known to herself. For certain, the doctor had no bobs in his ears, and no painted Madame in his company; and, for as much a Dutchman as he called himself, had far more the air of a Jew from Whitechapel than of a citizen of Amsterdam. He was a dark sallow man, chiefly remarkable for a pair of green spectacles, and a dark blue cloak of singular amplitude, both of which he wore rather as articles of decoration than of convenience. And certainly the cloak, arranged in the most melodramatic drapery, and the spectacles adjusted with a peculiarly knowing air, had no small effect in arresting the attention of our Belfordians, and still more in attracting the farmers, and their wives and daughters, on a Saturday morning, when the doctor was sure to plant himself on one side of the market-place, and seldom failed to excite the curiosity of the passers-by. Doctor Joseph Vanderhagen, in his cloak and his spectacles, was worth a score of advertisements and a whole legion of bill-stickers. It was enough to bring on a fit of the toothache to look at him.

In other respects, the man was perfectly well conducted; cheated nobody except in the way of his profession; was civil to his hostess, and very well disposed to fall in love with her niece; making, according to Mrs. Drake's account (who amused herself sometimes with reckoning up the list on her fingers), the two-and-twentieth of Mary Marshall's beaux.

How this little damsel came to have so many admirers it is difficult to say, for she had neither the beauties nor the faults which usually attract a multitude of lovers. She was

not pretty—that is quite certain; nor was she what is generally called a flirt, particularly in her rank of life, being perfectly modest and quiet in her demeanour, and peculiarly unshowy in her appearance. Still there was a charm, and a great charm, in her delicate and slender figure, graceful and pliant in every motion—in the fine expression of her dark eyes, with their flexible brows and long eyelashes—in a smile combining much sweetness with some archness—and in a soft low voice, and a natural gentility of manner, which would have rendered it the easiest thing in the world to have passed off Mary Marshall for a young lady.

Little did Mary Marshall meditate such a deception! She, whilst her aunt was leisurely sipping her fourth cup of tea, lecturing her all the while after that approved but disagreeable fashion which aunts and godmammas, and other advisers by profession, call talking to young people for their good,—she having turned down her empty tea-cup, and given it three twirls according to rule, was now occupied in examining the position which the dregs of tea remaining in it had assumed, and trying to tell her own fortune, or rather to accommodate what she saw to what she wished, by those very fallacious but very conformable indications.

"Now, Mary, can there be anything so provoking as your wanting to go to Denham Farm to-night, in such a fog, and almost dark, just to carry Charlotte Higgs's straw bonnet? It will be four o'clock before you are ready to set off, and thieves about, and you coughing all night and all day! Anybody would think you were crazy. What would your relation and godmother Madam Cotton say, I wonder, if she knew of your tramping about after dark? —she that warned me not to let you go into the way of any of those Denham chaps, especially those Lanes, who are no better than so many poachers and vagrants. I should not wonder if that tall fellow Charles Lane came to be hanged. What would Mrs. Cotton say to your going right amongst them, knowing as you do that Charles Lane and Tom Hill fought about you last Michaelmas that ever was? What would Mrs. Cotton say, she that means to give you a power of money, if you are but discreet and prudent as a young woman ought to be? You know yourself that Madam Cotton hates Charles Lane, and would be as mad as a March hare."

"Look, aunt," said Mary, still poring over her tea-cup and showing the hieroglyphics round the bottom to her aunt,—"Look! if there is not the road I'm going to-night as plainly marked as in a picture. Look there! the tall chimneys at Bristol Place; and the flat, low houses on the terrace; and the two lamp-posts at the turnpike, and the avenue, and the lodges, and then the turn round the Park to the Farm,—look! and then a tall stranger."

"That's Charles Lane!" interrupted Mrs. Drake;—"he's as tall as the Moniment, and, as Madam Cotton says, no better than a thief. "He'll certainly come to be hanged—everybody says he has not done a stroke of work this twelvemonth, and lives altogether by poaching and thieving. And Tom Hill is noted for having beaten his own poor mother, so that he's no better. And the town chaps are pretty near as bad," continued Mrs. Drake, going on with the bead-roll of Mary's lovers; "for Will Meadows, the tinman, he tipples; and Sam Fielding, the tailor, he plays all day and all night at four-corners; and Bob Henshall, the shoemaker lad, he——But are you really going?" pursued Mrs. Drake, perceiving that Mary had lain down her tea-cup and was tying on her bonnet. "Are you really going out all by yourself this foggy evening?"

"Yes, dear aunt! I promised Charlotte Higgs her bonnet—she must have it to go to church to-morrow; and I shall just fall in with the children going back from school, and I'll have nothing to say to Charles Lane or Tom Hill, and I'll be back in no time," cried Mary, catching up her bandbox and preparing to set off just as Dr. Vanderhagen entered the shop.

"If you will go, take my shawl," said Mrs. Drake. "'Tis not so good as that which Mrs. Cotton gave you and the French Madam cheated you out of, but 'twill keep out the damp;—don't be obstinate, there's a dear, but put it on at once."

"Meese had bedere take my cloak," interrupted the doctor, gallantly flinging its ample folds over her slight figure, and accompanying the civility by pressing offer of his own escort; which Mary declined, accepting by way of compromise the loan of the mysterious mantle, and sallying forth into Bristol-street just as the lamps were lighting.

"It's lucky it's so dark," thought Mary to herself, as she tripped lightly along, carefully avoiding the school-children,—"it's well it's so dark, for everybody knows the doctor's cloak, and one should not like to be seen in it; though it was very kind in him to lend it to me, that I must say; and it's ungrateful in me to dislike him so much, only that people can't help their likings or dislikings. Now my aunt, she likes the doctor; but I don't quite think she wants me to marry him either, because of his being a foreigner. She can't abide foreigners since the Mounseer with the ear-bobs. But to think of her fancying that I cared for Charles Lane!" thought Mary, smiling to herself very saucily, as she walked rapidly up the avenue. "Charles Lane, indeed! I wonder what she and Mrs. Cotton would say if they knew the truth!" thought Mary, sighing and pursuing her reverie. "Tim says he's a favourite with the old lady; but then he's *so* poor, and a sort of a foreigner into the bargain, and there's no telling what they might say; so it's as well they should have Charles Lane

in their heads. But where can Tim be this dark, *unked* night?" thought poor Mary, as, leaving the lodges to the right, she turned down a lonely road that led to the Farm, about a quarter of a mile distant. "He promised to meet me at the park-gate at half-past four; and here it must be nearer to five, and no signs of the gentleman. Some people would be frightened," said the poor trembling lass to herself, trying to *feel* valiant,—"some people would be frightened out of their wits, walking all by themselves after sunset, in such a fog that one can't see an inch before one, and in such a lonesome way, and thieves about."

And just at this point of her soliloquy a noise was heard in the hedge, and a ruffian seizing hold of her, demanded her money or her life.

Luckily the villain had only grasped the thick cloak; and undoing the fastenings with instinctive rapidity, Mary left the mantle in his hands and ran swiftly towards the Farm, hardly able, from the beating of her heart, to ascertain whether she was pursued, though she plainly heard the villain swearing at her escape. In less than two minutes a pleasanter sound greeted her ears, in the shape of a well-known whistle; and the ejaculation, "Oh, Tim! why did not you meet me as you promised?" she almost fell into his extended arms.

"Is it why I did not meet you, Mary dear?" responded Tim tenderly; "sorrow a bit could I come before now, anyhow! There has been a spalpeen of a thief, who has kilt John the futman, and murdered Mrs. Cotton, who were walking this way from Belford to the Park by cause of its shortness; and he knocked John on the head with a bludgeon, and stole a parcel of law dades belonging to the master; and the master is madder nor a mad bull, because he says that all his estates and titles lays in the parcel—which seems to be sure a mighty small compass for them to be in. And the cowardly spalpeen, after flinging John under the ditch, murdered Mrs. Cotton, and tore off her muff tippet, and turned her pockets inside out—them great panniers of pockets of hers,—and stole her thread-cases, and pincushions, and thimbles, and scissors, and a needle-book worked by some forrin queen, and a bundle of love-letters two-and-forty years ould;—think of that, Mary dear! Poor ould lady! she was young in them days. So she's as mad as the master. And they've sent all the world over to offer a reward for the thief, and raise the country; and I'm away to the town to fetch the mayor and corporation, and the poliss and the constable, and all them people; for its hanged the rogue must be as sure as he's alive,—though I suppose he's far enough off by this time."

"He was here not five minutes ago," replied Mary, "and robbed me of the Doctor's cloak—Doctor Vanderhagen;—so pray let us go to the Farm, dear Tim, for fear of his knocking you down too, and murdering you, like poor John and Mrs. Cotton; though, if she's dead, I don't understand how she can be so mad for the loss of the love-letters!"

"Dead! no—only kilt! Sure the woman may be murdered without being dead! And as for the knocking me down, I'll give the thief free lave to do that same—knock me down, and pickle me, and ate me into the bargain, if he can. I'm a Connaught boy, as he'll find to his cost, and not a slip of a futman like John, or an ould faymale like Mrs. Cotton, all the while maning no disrespect to either; and my twig of a tree" (flourishing a huge cudgel) "is as good as his bit of oak any day. So come along, Mary dear. I undertuk for the mayor and the poliss and the constable; and sorrow a reward do I want, for the villain desarves hanging worse nor ever for frightening you and staling the Doctor's big cloak."

So in spite of Mary's reluctance, they pursued the way to Belford. Tim loitered a little as they got near to the place where Mary thought she had been robbed,—for she had been too much frightened and the evening was too dark to allow of her being very positive in the matter of locality; and although the fog and the increasing darkness made his seeing the thief almost impossible, Tim could not help loitering and thumping the hedge (or, as he called it, the ditch) with his great stick, pretty much after the fashion of sportsmen beating for a hare. He had, however, nearly given up the pursuit, when Mary stumbled over something which turned out to be her own bandbox, containing Charlotte Higgs's bonnet, which she had never missed before, and at the same moment close beside her, just within the bushes which her lover had been beating, came the welcome sound of a violent fit of sneezing.

"Luck be with you, barring it's the snuff!" ejaculated our friend Tim, following the sound, and dragging out the unhappy sneezer by Dr. Vanderhagen's cloak, which he had probably been induced to assume for the convenience of carriage: "luck be with you!" exclaimed Tim, folding the strong broadcloth round and round his prisoner, whom he rolled up like a bale of goods, whilst he hallooed to one party advancing with lanterns from the farm, and another running with a candle from the lodge,—which, when seen from a distance moving through the fog, no trace of the bearers being visible, had something of the appearance of a set of jack-o'-lanterns.

As they advanced, however, each faintly illuminating its own small circle, and partially dispelling the obscurity, it was soon discovered, aided by the trampling of many footsteps and the confused sound of several voices, that a considerable number of persons were advancing to the assistance of our Irish friend.

Little did he seek of their aid. The Connaught boy and his shilelah would have been equal to the management of half-a-dozen footpads in his single person.

"Hand me that dark lantern, John Higgs, till we take a look at this jontleman's beautiful countenance," quoth Tim. "She gives as much light," continued Tim, apostrophizing the lantern, "as the moon when it's set,—and that's none at all! Lie *quite*," added he, addressing his prisoner, "lie *quite*, can't ye, and take the world asy till we sarch ye dacently. Arrah! there's the coach parcel, with them dades and titles of the master's. And there's Madam Cotton's big pincushion and all her trimtrams hid in the ditch—ay, this is them! Hould the lantern a bit lower!—here's the hussy, and there's the love-letters, wet through, at the bottom of the pool—all in a sop, poor ould lady! I'm as sorry as ever was for the sopping of them love-letters, becase, I dare say, being used to 'em so long, she'd fancy 'em better nor new ones. Arrah, an't you ashamed of yourself to look at that housewife, worked by a forrin queen, all over mud as it is? Can't you answer a civil question, you spalpeen? Ought you not to be ashamed of yourself, first for thieving, then for sopping them poor dear love-letters, and then for being such a fool as to stay here to be caught like a fox in a trap? I suppose you thought the fog was not dark enough, and so waited for the stars to shine,—eh, Mr. Lane?"

"Mr. Lane! Charles Lane!" exclaimed Mary, stooping to examine the prostrate thief. "Yes, it really is Charles Lane! How strange!" added she, thinking of her aunt's prediction, and of the tall stranger in the teacup to which she had given so different an interpretation—"how very strange."

"Nay," rejoined Mr. Denham, advancing into the circle, "I have long feared that poaching, and drunkenness, and idleness, would bring him to some deplorable catastrophe. But, Tim, you are fairly entitled to the reward that I was about to offer; so come with me to the Park and——"

"Not I, your honour! It's little Mary here that was the cause of catching the thief,—little Mary and the doctor's cloak; and it's them,—that is to say, Mary and the cloak,—that's entitled to the reward."

"But, my good fellow, I must do something to recompense the service you have rendered me by your spirit and bravery. Follow me to the house, and then——"

"Sure I'd follow your honour to the end of the world, let alone the house! But," continued Tim, approaching Mr. Denham and speaking in a confidential whisper; "sorrow a bit of reward do I want, except it's little Mary herself; and if your honour would be so good as to spake a word for us to Mrs. Cotton and Mrs. Drake," added Tim, twirling his hat, and putting on his most insinuating manner—"if your honour would but spake a good word—becase Mrs. Drake calls me a forriner, and Mrs. Cotton says I'm a decaiver,—one word from your honour——" pursued Tim coaxingly.

"And what does Mary say?" inquired Mr. Denham.

"Is it what little Mary says, your honour? Arrah, now ask her! But it's over-shy she is!" exclaimed Tim, throwing his arm round Mary's slender waist as she turned away in blushing confusion; "she'll not tell her mind before company. But the best person to ask is ould Mrs. Cotton, who tould me this very morning that I was a decaiver, and that there was not a faymale in the parish who would say No to a wild Irishman. Best ask her. She'll be out of her flurry and her tantrums by this time; for I left her making tay out of coffee, and drinking a drop of dark-coloured whiskey—cherry-bounce the futman called it—to comfort her after the fright she got, poor cratur! Jist ask her. It's remarkable," continued Tim, as obeying his master's kind commands, he and the fair damsel followed Mr. Denham to the house, under a comfortable persuasion that the kind word would be spoken; "it's remarkable anyhow," said Tim, "that them dades and titles, and the pincushion, which would not have minded wetting a halfpenny, should be high and dry in the ditch; and that the forrin queen's needle-book, and them ould ancient love-letters should have the luck of a sopping. Well, it was no fault of ours, Mary dear, as his honour can testify. The spalpeen of a thief desarves to be sent over the water, if it was only in respect to them love-letters."

And so saying, the Irishman and his fair companion reached the mansion. And how Mr. Denham pleaded, and whether Mrs. Cotton and Mrs. Drake, "the ould faymales," as Tim irreverently called them, proved tenderhearted or obdurate, I leave the courteous reader to settle to his own satisfaction: for my part, if I were called on to form a conjecture, it would be, that the Irishman proved irresistible, and the lovers were made happy.

MARK BRIDGMAN.

One of the persons best known in Belford was an elderly gentlemen seldom called by any other appellation than that of Mark Bridgman—or, as the irreverent youth of the place were sometimes wont to style him, Old Mark.

Why he should be spoken of in a manner so much more familiar than respectful, were difficult to say; for certainly there was nothing in his somewhat shy and retiring manner to provoke familiarity, whilst there was everything in his mild and venerable aspect to secure respect.

True it was, that the grave and old-fashioned garments in which his slight and somewhat bent figure was constantly arrayed, betrayed a smallness of worldly means which his humble dwelling and still more humble establishment—for his whole household consisted of one ancient serving maiden, still more slight and bent than her master—did not fail to corroborate; and perhaps that impression of poverty, aided by the knowledge of his want of patrimonial distinction, (for he was the son of a tradesman in the town,) and still more, his having been known to the older inhabitants from boyhood, and resided amongst them for many years, might serve to counteract the effect of the diffident and somewhat punctilious manner which in general ensures a return of the respect which it evinces, as well as of a head and countenance which a painter would have delighted to delineate—so strikingly fine was the high, bald, polished forehead, so delicately carved the features, and so gentle and amiable the expression.

Mark Bridgman had been the youngest of two sons of a Belford tradesman, who being of the *right* side in politics, (which in those days meant the tory side,) contrived to get this his youngest son a clerkship in a public office; whilst his elder hope, active, bustling, ambitious, and shrewd, pushed his fortune in his father's line of business in London, and accumulated, during a comparatively short life, so much money, that his only surviving son was enabled at his death to embark in bolder speculations, and was at the time of which I write a flourishing merchant in the city.

Mark was, on his side, so entirely free from the visions of avarice, that, as soon as he had remained long enough in his office to entitle him to such a pension as should enable himself and his solitary servant-maid to exist in tolerable comfort, he forsook the trade of quill-driving, and returned to his native town to pass the remainder of his days in one of the smallest dwellings in Mill Lane. It was true that he had received some thousands with a wife who had died within a few months of their marriage, and that he had also received a legacy of about the same amount from his father;—but these sums were not to be taken into the account of his ways and means, inasmuch as they had been spent after a fashion which, if the disembodied spirit retain its ancient prejudices, might almost have drawn that thriving ironmonger back into this wicked world to express, in ghostly form, the extent of his indignation.

Be it wise or not, the manner in which these moneys had been spent had rendered Mark Bridgman's back parlour in Mill Lane one of the lions of Belford.

In that small room,—small with reference to its purpose, but very large as compared with the rest of the dwelling, and lighted from the top, as all buildings for pictures ought to be,—in that little back parlour were assembled some half-dozen chefs-d'œuvre, that the greatest collection of the world might have been proud to have included amongst the choicest of its treasures: a landscape by Both, all sunshine; one by Ruysdael, all dew; a land-storm by Wouvermans, in looking at which one seemed to feel the wind, and folded one's raiment about one involuntarily; a portrait of Mieris by himself, in which, inspired perhaps by vanity, he united his own finish to the graces of Vandyke; a Venus by Titian — need one say more? — and two large pictures on the two sides of the room, of which, all unskilled in art as I confessedly am, I must needs attempt a description, the more inadequate perhaps because the more detailed.

One was a landscape with figures, by Salvator Rosa, called, I believe, after some scriptural story, but really consisting of a group of Neapolitan peasants, some on horseback, some on foot, defiling through a pass in the mountains—emerging, as it were, from darkness into light. The effect of this magnificent picture cannot be conveyed by words. The spectator seemed to be in darkness too, looking from the dusky gloom of the cavernous rocks and overhanging trees into the light and air, the figures thrown out in strong relief; and all this magical effect produced, as it seemed, almost without colour—a little blue, perhaps, on the edge of the palette—by the mere force of chiaroscuro. One never sees Salvator Rosa's compositions without wonder; but this landscape, in its simple grandeur, its power of fixing itself on the eye, the memory, the imagination, seems to me to transcend them all.

The other was an historical picture by Guercino—David with the head of Goliath,—a picture which, in spite of the horror of the subject, is the very triumph of beauty. The ghastly face, which is so disposed that the eye can get away from it, serves to contrast and relieve the splendid and luxuriant youth and grace of the other figures. David, the triumphant warrior, the inspired poet, glowing with joy and youthful modesty, is fitly accompanied by two female figures; the one a magnificent brunette, beating some oriental instrument not unlike a drum, with her dark hair flowing down on each side of her bright and beaming countenance; the other, a fair young girl, lightly and exquisitely formed, bending her lovely face over a music-book, with just such a sweet unconsciousness, such a mixture of elegance and innocence, as one should wish to see in a daughter of one's own. A great poet once said of that picture, that "it was the Faun with colour;" and most surely it is not possible even for Grecian art to carry farther the mixture of natural and ideal gracefulness.*

* Vide note at the end of the article.

These pictures, for which he had over and over again refused a sum of money almost too large to mention, formed, together with two or three chairs so placed as best to display to the sitter the Salvator and the Guercino, the sole furniture of Mark Bridgman's back parlour. He had purchased them himself, during two or three short trips to the Continent, at Rome, at Naples, at Vienna, at Antwerp; and having expended his last shilling in the formation of his small but choice selection, sat himself quietly down in Mill Lane, without any thought of increase or exchange, enjoying their beauties with a quiet delight which (although he was kindly anxious to give to those who loved paintings the pleasure of seeing his) hardly seemed to require the praise and admiration of others to stimulate his own pleasure in their possession. It was a very English feeling. Some of the Dutch burgomasters had, in days of yore, equally valuable pictures in equally small rooms: but there was more of vanity in the good Hollanders; vanity of country, for their paintings were Dutch,—and vanity of display, for their collections were known and visited by all travellers, and made a part, and a most ostensible part, of their riches.

Our good Englishman had no such ambition. He loved his pictures for themselves; and if he had any pride in knowing himself to be their possessor, showed it only in not being at all ashamed of his poverty,—in thinking, and seeming to think, that the owner of those great works of art could afford to wear a threadbare coat and live in a paltry dwelling. Even his old servant Martha seemed to have imbibed the same feeling,—loved the Guercino and the Salvator as fondly as her master did, spoke of them with the same respect, approached them with the same caution, and dusted the room as reverently as if she had been in presence of a crowned queen.

In these pictures Mark Bridgman lived and breathed. He cultivated no associates, visited nobody, read no books, looked at no newspapers, and, except in the matter of his own paintings, showed little of the common quality termed curiosity, or the rarer one called taste.

Two acquaintances indeed he had made during his long sojourn at Belford, and their society he had enjoyed with the relish of a congenial spirit: Louis Duval, to whom he had during his boyhood shown great kindness, and who had studied his Guercino with a love and admiration rivalling that which he felt for Mrs. St. Eloy's Vandyke; and Mr. Carlton, who was a professed lover of pictures, and had not failed to find his out during his two years' sojourn in Belford. And when the death of Mrs. St. Eloy left Louis master of the Nunnery, and his marriage with our young friend Hester (of which happy event I rejoice to be enabled to inform my readers) brought the two families together, sometimes at the Nunnery, and sometimes at Cranley Park, the old man was tempted out oftener than he or his maid Martha had thought possible.

Another person had tried to form an intimacy with him—no less a personage than Mr. King Harwood, who liked nothing better than flourishing and showing off before a great picture, and descanting on the much finer works of art that he had seen abroad and at home. But gentle and placid as our friend Mark was, he could not stand King Harwood: he was not a man of the world enough to have learned the art of hearing a coxcomb talk nonsense about a favourite object without wincing. To hear his paintings mispraised, went to his heart; so he fairly fled the field, and whenever Mr. King Harwood brought a party to Mill Lane, left Martha, who, besides being far less sensitive, had Sir Joshua's advantage of being a little deaf, to play the part of cicerone to his collection.

His nephew Harry also—a kind, frank, liberal, open-hearted man, to whom during his boyhood our connoisseur had been an indulgent and generous uncle,—paid him great attention; and of him and his excellent wife, and promising family, Mark Bridgman was perhaps as fond as of anything in this world, excepting his pictures, which for certain he loved better than anybody. Indeed for many years he had cared for nothing else; and the good old man sometimes wondered how he had been beguiled lately into bestowing so much affection upon creatures of flesh and blood,—since, besides his kinsman and his family, he had detected himself in feeling something very like friendship towards Louis and Hester, Mr. Carlton and old Martha, and even towards Mrs. Kinlay and Mrs. Duval. To be sure, Louis was a man of genius, and Mr. Carlton a man of taste, and Martha a faithful old servant; and as to Hester, why everybody did love Hester,—and besides, she was a good deal like the young girl with the music-book in his Guercino, and that accounted for his taking a fancy to her. It is remarkable that the good people who loved Hester, they could hardly tell why, used generally to conjure up some likeness to reconcile themselves to themselves for being caught by her fascinations. I myself think that she resembles a young friend of my own.—But we must come back to our story.

The uncle and nephew had not met for a longer time than usual, when, one bright April morning as Mark was sitting in his back parlour admiring for the thousandth time the deeply tinted and almost breathing lips of the Titian Venus, a hasty knock was heard at the door, and Harry Bridgman rushed into the room, pale, hurried, agitated, trembling; and before his kinsman, always nervous and slow of speech, could inquire what ailed him, poured forth a tale of mercantile embarrassments, of expected remittances, and lingering argosies

and merciless creditors, that might have shamed the perplexities of Antonio at the hour when Shylock claimed his money or his bond.

"I may have been imprudent in giving these acceptances," (said poor Harry,) "but I looked for letters from the house at Hamburg, which ought to have been here on the 24th, and bills from St. Petersburgh, which should have arrived a fortnight since, and would have covered the whole amount. Then the Fly-catcher from Honduras has been expected these ten days, with logwood and mahogany, and the Amphion from the Levant, has been looked for full three weeks, with a cargo of Smyrna fruit, that would have paid every farthing I owe in the world. Assets to the value of six times my debts are on the seas, and yet such is the state of the money-market, that I have been unable to raise the ten thousand pounds which must be paid to-morrow, and which not being paid, the rascal who holds my acceptances, and owes me an old grudge, will strike a docket, and all will be swept away by a commission of bankruptcy—all swallowed up in law and knavery: my wife's heart broken, my children ruined, my creditors cheated, and I myself disgraced for ever!" And Harry Bridgman, a fine hearty man in the middle of life, active, bold, and vigorous in mind and body, laid his hands upon the back of a chair, sunk his face into them, and wept aloud.

"Ten thousand pounds!" ejaculated the poor old man, his venerable bald head shaking as if with the palsy—"ten thousand pounds!"

"Yes, sir! ten thousand pounds," replied Harry. "God forgive me," added he, "for distressing you in this manner! But I am doomed to be a grief to all whom I love. I hardly know why I came here—only I could not stay at home. I could not look on poor Maria's face or the innocent children. And I thought you ought to know what was about to happen, that you might go to Cranley Park, or the Nunnery, till the name had been in the Gazette and the people had done talking. But I'll go now, for I cannot bear to see you so distressed: I would almost as soon face Maria and the children. Good-by, my dear uncle! God bless you!" said poor Harry, trying to speak firmly. "There are some hours yet. Perhaps the letters may arrive, or the ships. Perhaps times may mend!"

"Stay, Harry!" cried his uncle; "stay! we must not trust to ships and letters; we must not let Maria's heart be broken. *They* must go," said the old man, looking round the room and pointing to the Guercino and the Salvator: "they must be sold!"

"What! the pictures, sir? Oh no! no! the sacrifice is too great. You must not part with the pictures."

"They must go," replied the old man firmly: and walking slowly round the little room from one to the other, as if to take leave of them, and wiping with his handkerchief a speck of dust which the bright sunshine had made visible on the sunny Both, he left the apartment, locking the door behind him and carrying away the key.

"Louis Duval and Mr. Carlton have both said often and often, that they would gladly give ten thousand pounds for seven such pictures," said Mark Bridgman, taking his hat: "they are both now in the neighbourhood, and I have no doubt of their making the purchase. Don't object, Harry! Don't thank me: Don't talk to me!" pursued the good old man, checking his nephew's attempt at interruption with a little humour; "don't speak to me on the subject, for I can't bear it. But come with me to the Nunnery."

Silently the kinsmen walked thither, and in almost equal silence (for there was a general respect for the old man's feelings) did they, accompanied by Louis and Mr. Carlton, return. The party stopped at the Belford Bank, and there they parted; Harry armed with a check for ten thousand pounds to pay off his merciless creditor.

"Go to London, Harry," said the old man, "and say no more about the matter. I have made idols of these pictures, and it is perhaps good for me that I should be deprived of them. Go to Maria and the children and be happy!"

And, his warm heart aching with gratitude and regret, Harry obeyed.

Mark on his side went back to Mill Lane, not quite unhappy, because his conscience was satisfied; but yet feeling at *his* heart's core the full price of the sacrifice he had made. He dared not trust himself again with a sight of the pictures; he dared not tell Martha that he had sold them, for he knew that her regrets would awaken his own. He had begged Mr. Duval to convey them away early the next morning, and in the very few words that had passed, (for in making the bargain he had limited Louis to yes or no,) had desired him to send the key, which he left with him, by the messenger; and on going to bed at night, he summoned courage to inform Martha that the pictures were to be delivered to the bearer of the key of the room where they were deposited, and charged her not to come to him until they were fairly removed.

He spoke in a lower voice than usual, and yet it is remarkable that the poor old woman, usually so deaf, heard every word with a painful and startling distinctness. She had thought that something very grievous was the matter from the moment of Harry's arrival, but such a grief as this she had never even contemplated; and forbidden by her master from giving vent to her vexation before him, and unable to get at the beloved objects of her sorrow, the dear pictures, she sat down on the ground by the locked door, and solaced her-

self by a hearty cry, of which the tendency was so composing that she went to bed and slept nearly as well as usual.

Very different was her master's case. Men have so many advantages over women, that they need not grudge them the unspeakable comfort of crying; although in many instances, and especially in this, it makes all the difference between a good night and a bad one. Mark never closed his eyes. His waking thoughts, however, were not all unpleasant. He thought of Maria and the children, and of Harry's generous reluctance to deprive him of his treasures — and so long as he thought of that, he was happy. And then he thought of Louis Duval,—how well he deserved these pictures, and how much he would value them; for Mark had been amongst Louis's earliest patrons and kindest friends, and would undoubtedly have served Henry Warner, had he not been abroad during the few months that he spent at Belford. And then too he thought of Hester, and of her resemblance to the girl with the music-book. But then unluckily that recollection brought vividly before him the Guercino itself,—and how he could live without that picture he could not tell! And then the night seemed endless.

At length morning dawned. But no sound was heard of cart or wagon, or messenger from the Nunnery, though he had implored Louis to send by daybreak. Five o'clock struck, and six, and seven,—and no one had arrived. At last, a little before eight, a single knock was heard at the door, but no cart, —a single knock; and, after a moment's parley, the *knocker* went away, and the postman arrived, and, too impatient to wait longer, the old gentleman rang the bell for his housekeeper.

Martha arrived, bringing two letters. One, a heavy packet, had been left by a servant; the other had arrived by the post. As our friend Mark opened the first, a key dropped out. The contents were as follows:

"*The Nunnery, April 18th.*

"My dear Sir,

"As you had your way yesterday, when you forbade me to say anything more than yes or no, you must allow me to have mine to-day. I return the key, with an earnest entreaty that you will condescend to be the guardian of that and of the pictures. Long, very long, may you continue so! Hester says that she should never see those pictures with comfort anywhere but in their own gallery, the dear back parlour; and you know that Hester always has her own way with everybody.

"From the little that you would suffer Mr. H. Bridgman to say yesterday, both Mr. Carlton and myself are inclined to consider this money as a loan, to be returned at his convenience; and our chief fear is lest he should hurry himself in the repayment.

"Should it, however, prove otherwise, just remember how very kind you were to me, a poor and obscure boy, at a time when your money, your encouragement, your good word, and, above all, your permission to copy the Guercino, were favours far greater than I ever can return. Recollect that I owe to the study of the girl with the music-book that notice from Mr. Carlton which led to my acquaintance with Hester.

"After this, you must allow, that even if this sum were never repaid, the balance of obligation must still be on my side,—and that I must always remain

"Your grateful friend and servant,

"Louis Duval."

With a trembling hand the old man opened the other letter. He had some trouble in deciphering Louis's, perhaps because he had been obliged to wipe his spectacles so often; and this epistle, although shorter and written in a bold mercantile hand, proved more difficult still. Thus it ran:

"*London, April 17th.*

"My dear Uncle,

"On my return to town, I found that remittances had arrived from Hamburg and St. Petersburgh; that the good ship Amphion was safe in port, and that the Flycatcher had been spoken with and was within two days' sail;—in short, that all was right in all quarters; and that Maria, until I told her the story, had not even suspected my embarrassments. Imagine our intense thankfulness to you and to Heaven! I have returned the check to Mr. Duval. The obligation I do not even wish to cancel; for to be grateful to such a person is a most pleasurable feeling. I am quite sure, from the very few words that you would suffer any one to speak yesterday, that he considers the affair as a loan, and that the dear pictures are still in the dear back parlour. I forgot to tell you that the Amphion was to touch at Cadiz for two more paintings, a Velasquez and a Murillo; for which, if you cannot find room, Mr. Duval must.

"Once again, accept my most fervent thanks, and believe me ever

"Your obliged and affectionate

"Kinsman and friend,

"H. Bridgman."

The gentle reader must imagine, for I cannot describe, the feelings of the good old man on the perusal of these letters, and the agitated delight with which, after he and Martha had contrived to open the door, (for, somehow or other, their hands shook so that they could hardly turn the key in the lock,) they both surveyed the rescued treasures. Also, he must settle to his fancy the long-disputed point (for it has been a contest of no small duration, and is hardly finished yet,) of the

ultimate destination of the Velasquez and the Murillo,—whether both went to the Nunnery as Mark Bridgman proposed, or both to Mill Lane as Louis Duval desired; or whether Hester's reconciling clause were agreed to, and the merchant's grateful present divided between the parties. For my part, if I were inclined to bet upon the occasion, I should lay a considerable wager that the lady had her way. But, as I said before, the courteous reader must settle the matter as seems to him best.

Note.—They who live in the neighbourhood of Reading will recognize, in the splendid paintings that I have attempted to describe, two of the chief ornaments of Mr. Anderdon's beautiful and select collection at Farley Hill. It may add to the interest of the Salvator to say, that it was that picture (originally purchased by the very tasteful and liberal possessor from the gallery of the King of Naples) which converted our own great painter Wilkie from his originally brilliant and sparkling style to his present chaster and severer manner. He used to visit Mr. Anderdon and his pictures every morning at Rome, where the picture and its accomplished proprietors remained some time, and from intense admiration of its boldness and breadth, resolved to abandon his own glittering effects, and to revert, as all the world knows how finely he has done, to the utmost purity and simplicity of the art. There are who complain of this change of style; but, for my part, I think that he has done well, if only to prove that there is no mode of the pencil in which he does not excel.

An interesting anecdote also belongs to the Guercino. It was purchased from the collection at the Colonna Palace; and Mr. Anderdon says that from the moment he became the owner of that picture the old servants seemed to transfer their allegiance to him, as if the possession of the David had been the charter under which they served.

I could talk for ever of this exquisite collection, unique in the admirable taste moral as well as pictorial with which it has been selected, full of the best works of the best masters, and rich in those paintings of which everybody has heard, and which to see forms an epoch in one's life.

There, for instance, is almost the only serious work of Teniers—an exquisitely painted landscape, with three figures from the New Testament, (for although the glory round the head indicates the Christ, the subject, I believe, is not exactly ascertained,) and with no sign of Teniers, except what he could not help, the trace of a Dutch-like country festival in the background. There is the famous Coral Fishery on the coast of Africa, by Salvator Rosa; a sea-view breathing heat—the very water seems ready to boil. And there that Holy Family by Andrea del Sarto, of which so pretty a story is currently told. The artist, it is said, went out one day, leaving this picture unfinished upon the easel; and Raphael happening to call, painted in the head of the Madonna by way of visiting-card. That the head of the Virgin is by Raphael, there can be no manner of doubt. It has the grace, the sweetness, the composure, the light stealing from under the eyelids, the brow of thought, the look of love, which he, and he only, was used to give to the Virgin Mother.

But the glory of this collection—the gem amongst gems, is a copy from Andrea Sacchi, by its kind and liberal owner's most kind and most richly-gifted wife. It is a St. Bruno, a head purely intellectual, of which the charm is that, which generally vanishes from all copies of great pictures—the singular and beautiful expression. A friend of mine walking through the rooms said very happily, that next to being the paintress of the St. Bruno, she would wish to be the possessor of the David. The purchaser of the original wished to exchange it for the copy: and the Duke de Berri, no mean judge, died in the persuasion that no woman ever did or could paint such a picture, and that it was an original by Carlo Dolce.

Mrs. Anderdon, whom I have the honour and pleasure of counting amongst my friends, will chide me for putting her name into a book. But nobody else will; and in good truth she must forgive me, for the temptation was too great to be withstood. If she does not like to be talked about, she should not paint so well: the effect is the natural consequence of the cause.

ROSAMOND:

A STORY OF THE PLAGUE.

In the reign of Charles the Second—that reign over which the dissolute levity of the monarch and his court, and the witty pages of Count Anthony Hamilton, have shed a false and delusive glare, which is sometimes mistaken for gaiety, but in which the people, harassed by perpetual treasons, or rumours of treasons, and visited by such tremendous calamities as the Fire and Plague, seem to have been anything rather than gay;—in that troubled and distant reign, Belford was, as now, a place of considerable size and importance; probably, when considered relatively with the size of other towns and the general population of the kingdom, of as much consequence as at the present time.

True it is, that, in common with other worshipful things, the town "had suffered losses." The demolition of the abbey had been a blow which a charter from Queen Elizabeth, and even the high honour of bearing her royal effigy in the midst of four other maiden faces for the borough arms, had hardly repaired; whilst the munificent patronage of Archbishop Laud, a liberal benefactor to the public schools and charities of the place, scarcely made amends for the plunder of the corporation chest,—a measure resorted to on some frivolous pretext in the preceding reign, amongst many similar ways and means of King Jamie. But the grand evil of all was, that Belford happened to be so near the site of many of the battles and sieges of the Civil War, that the inhabitants had an undesired opportunity of judging with great nicety which of the two contending parties did most harm in friendly quarters, and whether the reprobate cavaliers of the royal army, or the godly troopers of the parliamentary forces, were the more oppressive and mischievous inmates of a peaceful town. Even the wise rule of Cromwell, excellent as regarded the restoration of prosperity within the realm, went but a little way in compensating for the long years of turmoil and disaster through which it had been ob-

tained; and although warned by the fines and penalties levied on the corporation by James the First of "happy memory," and aware that his grandson had, with somewhat diminished facilities for performing the operation, an equal taste for extracting money from the pockets of the lieges, that prudent body contrived to turn so readily with every wind during that stormy and changeable reign, that even Archbishop Laud's star-chamber itself must have pronounced their loyalty as unimpeachable as that of the docile and ductile Vicar of Bray, yet, such had been the effect of those different drawbacks, of the royal mulcts and fines and penalties, and of the exactions of the soldiery, in the Civil War, that the good town of Belford was hardly so opulent as its importance as a county town and its situation on the great river might seem to indicate, and by no means so gay as might have been expected from its vicinity to London and Oxford, and the royal residences of Hampton and Windsor.

"A dull, dreary, gloomy, ugly place as ever poor maiden was mewed up in!" it was pronounced by the fair Rosamond Norton, the ward and kinswoman of old Anthony Shawe, apothecary and herbalist, at the sign of the Golden Mortar, on the south end of the High Bridge,—"the dullest, dreariest, gloomiest, ugliest place that ever was built by hands! She was sure," she said, "that there was not such a melancholy, moping town in all England; and the people in it—the few folk that there were—looked sickly and pining, like the great orange-tree in a little pot in Master Shawe's green-house, or fretful and discontented like her own lark in his wired cage. Master Anthony was very kind to her—that she needs must say; but Belford and the Golden Mortar was a dreary dwelling-place for a young gentlewoman!"

And yet was Belford in those days a pretty place—prettier, perhaps, than now—with its old-fashioned picturesque streets, mingled with trees and gardens radiating from the ample market-place; its beautiful churches; the Forbury, with its open lawn and mall-like walk; the suburban clusters of rural dwellings in the outskirts of the town; and the bright clear river running through its centre like a waving line of light: a pretty place must Belford have been in those days! And a prettier dwelling than the Golden Mortar could hardly have been found within the precincts of the town or of the county.

The outward appearance of the house, as seen from the street, was indeed sufficiently unpromising. It was an irregular, low-browed tenement, separated from the river by two or three warehouses and granaries; and the shop, a couple of steps lower than the street, so that the descent into it had somewhat the effect of walking down into a cellar, was, although sufficiently spacious, dark and gloomy. The shelves, too, filled with bundles of dried camomile, saxifrage, pellitory, vervain, colemint, and a thousand other such herbs (vide our friend Nicholas Culpeper), with boxes of costly spices, rare gums, and mineral powders, and bottles filled with such oils and distilled waters as formed the fashionable medicines of the time,—had a certain dingy and ominous appearance, much increased by divers stuffed curiosities from foreign parts, amongst which an alligator suspended from the ceiling was the most conspicuous, and sundry glass jars, containing pickled reptiles and insects of various sorts, snakes, lizards, toads, spiders, and locusts; whilst a dusky, smoky laboratory, into which the shop opened, fitted up with stills, retorts, alembics, furnaces, and all the chemical apparatus of the day, added to the gloominess and discomfort of the general impression.

But, in one corner of that unpleasant-looking shop, fenced from general observation by a brown stuff curtain, was a flight of steps leading into apartments, not large indeed, but so light, so airy, so pleasant, so comfortable, that the transition from one side of the house to the other was like passing from night into day. These were the apartments of Rosamond. They opened too into a large garden, embracing the whole space behind the granaries and warehouses that led to the river-side, and extending back until stopped by wharfs for coals and timber, too valuable to be purchased:—for his garden was Anthony Shawe's delight; who, a botanist and a traveller, a friend of Evelyn's and a zealous cultivator of foreign plants, had filled the whole plot of ground with rare herbs and choice flowers, and had even attained to the luxury of a cold, damp, dark house for greens, where certain orange and lemon trees, myrtles, laurustinuses, and phillyreas languished through the winter, and were held for miracles of bounty and profusion, if in some unusually fine summer they had strength enough to bear blossoms and fruit. Ah me! what would Master Anthony Shawe and his worthy friend Master Evelyn say if they could but look upon the pits, the stove-houses, the conservatories, the gardening-doings of these horticultural days! I question if steam-boats and rail-roads would astonish them half so much.

Nevertheless, that garden, in spite of its cold greenhouse, was in its less pretending parts a place of exceeding pleasantness,—rich to profusion in the most beautiful of the English plants and shrubs, pinks, lilies, roses, jessamine, and fragrant in the aromatic herbs of all countries, which, together with the roots and leaves of flowers, formed so large a part of the materia medica of the time. So exceedingly pleasant was that garden, kept by constant watering in a state of delicious and dewy freshness that might vie with an April meadow, that I could almost sympathize

with Anthony Shawe, and wonder what Rosamond could wish for more.

Her little sitting-room was nearly as delightful as the flowery territory into which it led by a broad flight of steps from a small terrace with a stone balustrade, that ran along the back of the house. Master Anthony's ruling taste predominated even in the fitting up of this maiden's bower: the Flemish hangings were gorgeous, with hollyhocks, tulips, poppies, peonies, and other showy blossoms; a beautifully-finished flower-piece, by the old artist Colantonio del Fiore, which Anthony had himself brought from Naples, hung on one side of the room; a silver vessel for perfumes, adorned with an exquisitely-wrought device of vine-leaves with their tendrils, and ivies with their buds, in the matchless chasing of Benvenuto Cellini, stood on a marble slab beneath the mirror; and around that Venetian mirror was a recent acquisition, a work of art more precious and more beautiful than all—a garland of roses and honeysuckles, of anemones and water-lilies, of the loose pendent laburnum and the close clustering hyacinth, in the unrivalled carving of Gibbon; a garland, whose light and wreathy grace, whose depth and richness of execution, and incomparable truth of delineation, both in the foliage and the blossoms, seemed to want nothing but colour to vie with Nature herself. Persian carpets, gay with the gorgeous vegetation of the East, covered the floor, and the low stool on which she was accustomed to sit; the high-backed ebony chair, sacred to Master Anthony, boasted its bunch of embroidered carnations on the cushion; the vases that crowned the balustrade were filled with aloes and other foreign plants; jessamines and musk-roses were trained around the casement. All was gay and smiling, bright to the eye and sweet to the scent; yet still the ungrateful Rosamond pronounced Belford to be the dullest, dreariest, gloomiest town that was ever built by hands, and the Golden Mortar the saddest and dreariest abode wherein ever young maiden was condemned to sojourn: and if any one of the few neighbours and companions who were admitted to converse with the young beauty ventured, by way of consolation, to advert to the ornaments of her chamber—ornaments so unusual in that rank and age, that their possession excited something of envy mingled with wonder,—the perverse damsel would point to her imprisoned lark, chafing its feathers and beating its speckled breast against the bars of its cage, and ask whether the poor bird were happier for the bars being gilded?

Rosamond Norton was very distantly related to her kind guardian. She was the daughter of one whom, thirty years before (the date of which we are now speaking is 1662), he had loved with a fondness, an ardour, an intensity, a constancy, that deserved a better return:—the object of his passion, a light and laughing beauty, had preferred a gay and gallant cavalier to her grave and studious and somewhat puritanical cousin; had married Reginald Norton, then an officer in the king's service; had followed the fortunes of the royal family; and had led a roving and desultory life, sometimes in great indigence, sometimes in brief gaiety, as remittances from her family in England arrived or failed, until, on the death of her husband, she returned to take possession, by the clemency of the Lord Protector, of her paternal estate near Belford, bringing with her our friend Rosamond, her only surviving daughter; whom, on her death about a twelvemonth after the Restoration, she bequeathed to the care and guardianship of her true friend and loving kinsman Anthony Shawe.

Anthony, on his part, had felt the influence of his early disappointment throughout his apparently calm and prosperous destiny. For some few years after Mrs. Norton's marriage, he had travelled to Italy and the Levant—countries interesting in every respect to a scientific and inquiring mind, and especially gratifying to his researches in medicine and botany; and on his return he had established himself in his native town of Belford, pursuing, partly for profit and partly from an honest desire to be of some service in his generation, the mingled vocation of herbalist, apothecary, and physician. Sick or poor might always command his readiest service—the poor perhaps rather more certainly than the rich; and his skill, his kindness, and his almost unlimited charity rendered him universally respected and beloved.

Master Anthony had, however, his peculiarities. In religion he was a puritan; in politics, a roundhead: and although his peaceful pursuits and quiet demeanour, as well as the general good-will of his neighbours, had protected him from any molestation in the change of government that followed quickly on the death of Cromwell, yet his own strong prejudices, which the license of Charles's conduct contributed hourly to augment, the rigid austerity of his notions, and the solemn gravity of his deportment, rendered him, however kind and indulgent, no very acceptable guardian to a young and lovely woman, brought up in the contrary extremes of a romantic loyalty—a bigoted attachment to the forms and tenets of the high church, an unrestrained habit of personal liberty, and a love of variety and of innocent amusement natural to a lively and high-spirited girl.

Grateful, affectionate, and amiable in her disposition, with a warm heart and a pliant temper, it is however more than probable that Rosamond Norton would soon have lost, in the affectionate cares of her guardian, her pettish resentment at the unwonted restraints and wearisome monotony of her too tranquil abode, and would have taken root in her new habitation in little more time than it takes to settle

a transplanted flower, had not a far deeper and more powerful motive of disunion existed between them.

Whilst wandering with her parents from city to city abroad, she had become acquainted with a lad a few years older than herself—a relation of Rochester's, in the service of the king,—and an attachment warm, fervent, and indissoluble had ensued between the young exiles. When again for a short time in London with her mother, after the Restoration, the faithful lovers had met, and had renewed their engagement. Mrs. Norton, although not opposing the union, had desired some delay, and had died suddenly during the interval, leaving poor Rosamond in the guardianship of one who, of all men alive, was most certain to oppose the marriage. A courtier! a placeman! a kinsman of Rochester!—a favourite of Charles! Master Anthony would have thought present death a more hopeful destiny! That the young man was, in a position replete with danger and temptation, of unimpeachable morality and unexceptionable conduct,—that he was as prudent as he was liberal, as good as he was gay,—mattered little; he would not have believed her assertions, although an angel had come from heaven to attest their truth. The first act of his authority as guardian was to forbid her holding any communication with her lover; and poor Rosamond's bitter declamation on the dullness and ugliness of Belford and the Golden Mortar might all be construed into one simple meaning,—that Belford was a place where Richard Tyson was not.

We have it however upon high authority, that through whatever obstacles may oppose themselves, Love will find out the way; and it is not wondered that, a few evenings after the commencement of our story, Richard Tyson, young and active, should have rowed his little boat up the river—have moored it in a small creek belonging to the wharf of which we have made mention, at the end of Master Anthony's garden—have climbed by the aid of a pile of timber to the top of the wall—have leaped down on a sloping bank of turf, which rendered the descent safe and easy—and finally have hidden himself in a thicket of roses and honeysuckles, then in full bloom, to await the arrival of the lady of his heart. It was a lovely evening in the latter end of May, glowing, dewy, and fragrant as ever the nightingale selected for the wooing of the rose; and before the light had paled in the west, or the evening star glittered in the water, Richard's heart beat high within him at the sound of a light footstep and the rustling of a silken robe. She was alone—he was sure of that—and he began to sing in a subdued tone a few words of a cavalier song which had been the signal of their meetings long ago, when, little more than boy and girl, the affection to which they hardly dared to give a name had grown up between them in a foreign land. He sang a few words of that air which had been his summons at Brussels and the Hague, and in a moment the fair Rosamond, in the flowing dress which Lely has so often painted, and in all the glow of her animated beauty, stood panting and breathless before him.

What need to detail the interview? He pressed for an instant elopement—an immediate union, authorized by Rochester, connived at by the King; and she (such is the inconsistency of the human heart!) clung to the guardian whose rule she had thought so arbitrary—the home she had called so dreary: "she could not and would not leave Master Anthony;" all his kindness, his patient endurance of her pettishness, his fond anticipation of her wishes, his affectionate admonitions, his tender cares, rose before her as she thought of forsaking him; the good old man himself, with his thin and care-bent figure, his sad-coloured suit so accurately neat, and his mild, benevolent countenance, his venerable white head—all rose before her as she listened to the solicitations of her lover. "She could not leave Master Anthony!—she would wait till she was of age!"

"When you know, Rosamond, that your too careful mother fixed five-and-twenty as the period at which you were to attain your majority! How can I live during these tedious years of suspense and separation? Have we not already been too long parted? Come with me, sweetest! Come, I beseech you!"

"Wait, then, till the good old man consents?"

"And that will be never! Trifle no longer, dearest!"

"I cannot leave Master Anthony! I cannot abandon him in his old age!"

And yet how Richard managed, Love only knows; but before the twilight darkened into night, the fair Rosamond was seated at his side, rowing quickly down the stream in his little boat to the lonely fisherman's hut, about a mile from Belford, where swift horses and a trusty servant awaited their arrival; and before noon the next day the young couple were married.

The power of the court, in nothing more unscrupulously exercised than in the affairs of wardships, speedily compelled Master Anthony to place Rosamond's fortune unreservedly in the hands of her husband, and the excellent conduct of the young man on an occasion not a little trying, the gratitude with which he acknowledged the good management of her offended guardian, and begged him to dictate his own terms as to the settlements that should be made upon her, and to name himself the proper trustees—his deep personal respect, and earnest entreaties for the pardon and reconciliation, without which his wife's happiness would be incomplete,—were such

as might have mollified a harder heart than that of Master Shawe. That he continued obdurate, arose chiefly from the excess of his past fondness. In the course of his long life he had fondly loved two persons, and two only—Rosamond and her mother. The marriage of the first had fallen like a blight upon his manhood, had withered his affections, and palsied his energies in middle age; and now that the second object of his tenderness, the charming creature whom, for her own sake and for the remembrance of his early passion, he had loved as his own daughter—now that she had forsaken him, he was conscious of a bitterness of feeling, a vexed and angry grief, that seemed to turn his blood into gall. His mind settled down into a stern and moody resentment, to which forgiveness seemed impossible.

Rosamond grieved as an affectionate and grateful heart does grieve over the anger of her venerable guardian; and she grieved the more because her conscience told her that his displeasure, however excessive, was not undeserved. She that had been so repining and unthankful whilst the object of cares and the inmate of his mansion, now thought of the good old man with an aching gratitude, a yearning tenderness, all the deeper that these feelings were wholly unavailing. It was like the fond relenting, the too-late repentance with which we so often hang over the tomb of the dead, remembering all their past affection, and feeling how little we deserved, how inadequately we acknowledged it. Stern as he was, if Master Anthony could have seen into Rosamond's bosom, as she walked on a summer evening beneath the great lime-trees that overhung the murmuring Loddon, as it glided by her own garden at Burnham Manor, reminding her of the bright and silvery Kennet, and of the perfumed flower-garden by the High Bridge,—could he at such a moment have read her inmost thoughts, have penetrated into her most hidden feelings, angry as he was, Master Shawe would have forgiven her.

This source of regret was, however, the solitary cloud, the single shadow that passed over her happiness. Richard Tyson proved exactly the husband that she had anticipated from his conduct and character as a lover. Adversity had done for him what it had failed to do for his master, and had prepared him to enjoy his present blessings with thankfulness and moderation. Attached to the court by ties which it was impossible to break, he yet resisted the temptation of carrying his young and beautiful wife into an atmosphere of so much danger. She lived at her own paternal seat of Burnham Manor, and he spent all the time that he could spare from his official station in that pleasant retirement—the easy distance of Burnham (which lay about six or seven miles east of Belford) from London, Windsor, and Hampton Court, rendering the union of his public duties and his domestic pleasures comparatively easy.

So three years glided happily away, untroubled except by an occasional thought of her poor old guardian, whose "good white head," and pale, thoughtful countenance, would often rise unbidden to her memory. Three years had elapsed, and Rosamond was now the careful mother of two children; the one a delicate girl, about fourteen months old; the other a bold, sturdy boy, a twelvemonth older, to whom, with her husband's permission, she had given the name of Anthony. That kind husband was abroad on a mission of considerable delicacy, though of little ostensible importance, at one of the Italian courts; and his loving wife rejoiced in his absence—rejoiced even in the probability of its duration—for this was the summer of 1665, and the fearful pestilence, the great Plague of London, was hovering like a demon over the devoted nation.

This is not the place in which to attempt a description of those horrors, familiar to every reader through the minute and accurate narratives of Pepys and Evelyn, and the graphic pictures of De Foe. In the depths of her tranquil seclusion, the young matron heard the distant rumours of that tremendous visitation on the devoted city, and clasping her children to her breast, blessed Heaven that they were safe in their country home, and that their dear father was far away. Had he been in England—in London—attending, as was the duty of his office, about the person of the king, how could the poor Rosamond have endured such a trial!

A day of grievous trial did arrive, although of a different nature. The panic-struck fugitives who fled from the city in hopes of shunning the disease, brought the infection with them into the country; and it was soon known in the little village of Burnham, that the plague raged in Belford: the markets, they said, were deserted; the shops were closed; visiters and watchmen were appointed; the fatal cross was affixed against the infected houses; and the only sounds heard in those once busy streets, were the tolling of the bell by day, and the rumbling of the dead-cart by night. London itself was not more grievously visited.

"And Master Anthony?" inquired Rosamond, as she listened with breathless horror to this fearful intelligence—"Master Anthony Shawe?"

The answer was such as she anticipated. In that deserted town Master Anthony was everywhere, succouring the sick, comforting the afflicted, relieving the poor; he alone walked the streets of that stricken city as fearlessly as if he bore a charmed life.

"Comforting and relieving others, and himself deserted and alone!" exclaimed Rosamond, bursting into a flood of tears. "God

bless him! God preserve him!"—"If he should die without forgiving me!" added she, wringing her hands with all the bitterness of a grief quickened by remorse—"If he should die without forgiving me!" And Rosamond wept as if her very heart would break.

Better hopes, however, soon arose. She knew that Master Anthony, singularly skilful in almost all disorders, had, when in the Levant, made a particular study of the fearful pestilence that was now raging about him; he had even instructed her in the symptoms, the preventives, and the treatment of a malady from which, in those days, London was seldom entirely free; and above all, she knew him to have a confirmed belief, that they who fearlessly ministered to the sick, who did their duty with proper caution, but without dread, seldom fell victims to the disorder. Rosamond remembered how often she had heard him say that "a godly courage was the best preservative!" She remembered the words, and the assured yet reverent look with which he spake them, and she wiped away her tears and was comforted.

In the peaceful retirement of Burnham, one of the small secluded villages which lie along the course of the Loddon, remote from great roads,—a pastoral valley, hidden as it were amongst its own rich woodlands; in this calm seclusion she and her children and her household were as safe as if the pestilence had never visited England. All her anxieties turned, therefore, towards Belford; and Reuben Spence, an old and faithful servant, who had lived with her mother before her marriage, and had known Master Anthony all his life, contrived to procure her daily tidings of his welfare.

For some time these reports were sufficiently satisfactory: he was still seen about the streets on his errands of mercy. But one evening Reuben, on his return from his usual inquiries, hesitated to appear before his lady, and, when he did attend her repeated summons, wore a face of such dismay that, struck with a sure presage of evil, Rosamond exclaimed with desperate calmness, "He is dead! I can bear it. Tell me at once. He is dead?"

Reuben hastened to assure her that she was mistaken—that Master Anthony was not dead; but in answer to her eager inquiries he was compelled to answer, that he was said to be smitten with the disorder, that the fatal sign was on the door, and that there were rumours, for the truth of which he could not take upon himself to vouch, of plunder and abandonment,—that a trusted servant was said to have robbed the old man and then deserted him, and that he who had been during this visitation the ministering angel of the town, was now left to die neglected and alone.

"Alone!—but did I not leave him? Abandoned!—did not I abandon him? Gracious God! direct me, and protect those poor innocents!" cried Rosamond, glancing on her children; and then ordering her palfrey to be made ready, she tore herself from the sleeping infants, wrote a brief letter to her husband, and silencing by an unusual exertion of authority the affectionate remonstrances of her household, who all guessed but too truly the place of her destination, set forth on the road to Belford, accompanied by old Reuben, who in vain assured her that she was risking her life to no purpose, for that the watchman would let no one enter an infected house.

"Alas!" replied Rosamond, "did I not leave that house? I shall find no difficulty in entering."

Accordingly she directed her course through the by-lanes leading to the old ruins, and then, stopping short at the Abbey Bridge, dismissed her faithful attendant, who cried like a child on parting from his fair mistress, and following the course of the river, reached the well-known timber-wharf, and scaling with some little difficulty the wall over which her own Richard had assisted her so fondly upwards of three years before, found herself once again in Master Anthony's pleasant garden.

What a desolation! what a change! It was now the middle of September, and for many weeks the over-grown herbs and flowers had been left ungathered, unwatered, untended, uncared for; so that all looked wild and withered, neglected and decayed. The foot of man too had been there, trampling and treading down. The genius of Destruction seemed hovering over the place. All around the house, the garden, the river, the town, was as silent as death; the only sign of human habitation was one glimmering light in the upper window of a humble dwelling across the water, where some poor wretch lay, perhaps at that very moment in his last agonies. Except that one small taper, all was dark and still; not a leaf stirred in the night-wind; the very air was hushed and heavy, and Nature herself seemed at pause.

Rosamond lingered a moment in the garden, awe-struck with the desolation of the scene. She then applied herself to the task of gathering such aromatic herbs as were reckoned powerful against infection; for the happy wife, the tender mother, knew well the value of the life that she risked. Poor old Reuben, her faithful servant, proved that he also was conscious how precious was that life. Suspecting their destination, he had packed in a little basket such perfumes and cordials, and fragrant gums, as he thought most likely to preserve his fair mistress from the dreaded malady; and when reluctantly obeying her commands, and parting from her at the Abbey Bridge, he had put the basket into her almost unconscious hand, together with a light which he had procured at a cottage by the way-side.

Touched by the old man's affectionate care, which while gathering the herbs she had first

discovered, Rosamond proceeded up the steps to her own old chamber. The door was ajar, and the state of the little apartment, its opened drawers and plundered ornaments, told too plainly that the vague account which by some indirect and untraceable channel had reached Reuben was actually true: that the trusted housekeeper had robbed her indulgent master, incited, it may be, by the cupidity of that trying hour, when every bad impulse sprang into action under the universal demoralization; that the under-drudges had either joined her in the robbery, or had fled from the danger of contagion under the influence of a base and selfish fear; and that her venerable guardian was abandoned, as so many others had been, to the mercy of some brutal watchman, whose only care was to examine once or twice a day whether the wretch whose door he guarded were still alive, and to report his death to the proper authorities.

All this passed through Rosamond's mind with a loathing abhorrence of the vile ingratitude which had left him who had in the early stage of the pestilence been the guardian angel of the place, to perish alone and unsuccoured. "But did not I desert him!" exclaimed she aloud in the bitterness of her heart. "Did not I abandon him!—I, whom he loved so well!" And immediately, attracted perhaps by the sound, which proved that some person was near him, a feeble voice called faintly for "water."

With nervous haste Rosamond filled a jug and hurried to the small chamber — Master Anthony's own chamber — from whence the voice proceeded. The old man lay on the floor, dressed as if just returned from walking, his white head bare and his face nearly hidden by one arm. He still called faintly for water, and drank eagerly of the liquid as she raised that venerable head and held the jug to his lips; then, exhausted with the effort, he sank back on the pillow that she placed for him; and his anxious attendant proceeded to examine his countenance, and to seek on his breast and wrist for the terrible plague-spot, the fatal sign of the disorder.

No such sign was there. Again and again did Rosamond gaze, wiping away her tears, —look searchingly on that pale benevolent face, and inspect the bosom and the arm. Again and again did she feel the feeble pulse and listen to the faint breathing;—again and again did she wipe away her tears of joy. It was exhaustion, inanition, fatigue, weakness, age; it was even sickness, heavy sickness,—but not *the* sickness—not the plague.

Oh, how Rosamond wept and prayed, and blessed God for his mercies during that night's watching! Her venerable patient slept calmly—slept as if he knew that one whom he loved was bending over him; and even in sleep his amendment was perceptible,—his pulse was stronger, his breathing more free, and a gentle dew arose on his pale forehead.

As morning dawned—that dawning which in a sick room is often so very sad, but which to Rosamond seemed full of hope and life,—as morning dawned, the good old man awoke and called again for drink. Turning aside her face, she offered him a reviving cordial. He took it; and as he gave back the cup to her trembling hand, he knew that fair and dimpled hand, and the grace of that light figure: although her face was concealed, he knew her: —"Rosamond! It *is* my Rosamond!"

"Oh! Master Anthony!—dear Master Anthony! Blessings on you for that kind word! It is your own Rosamond! Forgive her!—forgive your own poor child!"

And the blessed tears of reconciliation fell fast from the eyes of both. Never had Master Anthony known so soft, so gentle, so tender a mixture of affection and gratitude. Never had Rosamond, in all the joys of virtuous love, tasted of a felicity so exquisite and so pure.

In the course of that morning, the good old Reuben, following, in spite of her prohibition, the track of his beloved mistress, made his way into Master Shawe's dwelling, accompanied by a poor widow whose son had been cured by his skill, and who came to offer her services as his attendant: and in less than a fortnight the whole party, well and happy, were assembled in the great hall of Burnham Manor; Master Anthony with his young namesake on his knee, and Richard Tyson, returned from his embassy, dandling and tossing the lovely little girl, whom they all, especially her venerable guardian, pronounced to be the very image of his own fair Rosamond.

OLD DAVID DYKES.

One of my earliest recollections in Belford was of an aged and miserable-looking little man, yellow, withered, meagre and bent, who was known by every boy in the place as old David Dykes, and had been popularly distinguished by that epithet for twenty years or more. There was not so wretched an object in the town; and his abode (for, destitute pauper as he seemed, he actually had a habitation to himself) was still more forlorn and deplorable than his personal appearance. The hovel in which he lived was the smallest, dirtiest, dingiest, and most ruinous, of a row of dirty, dingy, ruinous houses, gradually diminishing in height and size, and running down the centre of the Butts, which at one end was divided into two narrow streets by this unsightly and unseemly wedge of tumble-down masonry. Old David's hut consisted of nothing more than one dark, gloomy little room, which served him for a shop; a closet still smaller, behind; and a cock-loft, to which he ascended

by a ladder, and in no part of which could he stand upright, in the roof.

The shop was divided into two compartments; one side being devoted to a paltry collection of second-hand clocks and watches, he being by trade a watchmaker,—and the other to a still more beggarly assortment of old clothes, in the purchase and disposal of which he was particularly skilful, beating, although of Christian parentage, all the Jews of the place in their own peculiar art of buying cheap and selling dear. The manner in which he would cry down some half-worn gown or faded waistcoat, offering perhaps about a twentieth of its value, and affecting the most scornful indifference as to the bargain; the lynx-eye with which, looking up through his iron-rimmed spectacles from the clock-spring that he was engaged in cleaning, he would watch the conflict between necessity and indignation in the mind of the unfortunate vender; and then again the way in which, half-an-hour afterwards, he would cajole the dupe with a shilling into buying at five hundred per cent. profit what he had just purchased of the dupe without one,—might have read a lesson in the science of bargain-making to all Monmouth-street.

At such a moment there was a self-satisfied chuckle in the old wrinkled cheeks, a twinkle in the keen grey eyes which peered up through the old spectacles and the shaggy grey eyebrows, and a clutch of delight in the manner in which the long, lean, trembling fingers closed over the money, which went very far to counteract the impression produced by his wretched appearance. At the moment of a successful deal, when he had gained a little dirty pelf by cheating to right and left, first the miserable seller, then the simple purchaser—at such a moment nobody could mistake David Dykes for an object of charity. His very garments (the refuse of his shop, which even his ingenuity could not coax any one else into purchasing) assumed an air of ragged triumph; and his old wig, the only article of luxury—that is to say, the only unnecessary piece of clothing about him,—that venerable scratch on which there was hardly hair enough left to tell the colour, actually bristled up with delight. Poor for a certainty David was; but it was poverty of mind, and not of circumstances. The man was a miser.

This fact was of course perfectly well known to all his neighbours; and to this recognized and undeniable truth was added a strong suspicion that, in spite of his sordid traffic and apparently petty gains, David Dykes was not only a miser, but a rich miser.

He had been the son of a small farmer in the neighbourhood of Belford, and apprenticed to a watchmaker in the town; and when, on the death of his parents, his elder brother had succeeded in the lease and stock, he, just out of his time, had employed the small portion of money which fell to his lot in purchasing and furnishing the identical shop in Middle-row, in which he had continued ever since; and being a clever workman, and abundantly humble and punctual, speedily obtained a very fair share of employment, as the general cleaner and repairer of clocks and watches for half-a-dozen miles round. To this he soon added his successful traffic in second-hand clothes and other articles; and when it is considered that for nearly sixty years he had never been known to miss earning a penny, or to incur the most trifling expense, it may be conceded that they who supposed him well to do in the world, were probably not much out in their calculations.

His only companion was a fierce and faithful mastiff dog, one of dear Margaret Lane's army of pensioners. David had begged Boxer of her husband when a puppy; and Stephen, then a young man, and always good-natured and unwilling to refuse a neighbour, bestowed the high-blooded animal upon him with such stipulations as to care and food, as evinced his perfect knowledge of the watchmaker's character. "Mind," said Stephen, "that you feed that pup well. Don't think to starve him as you do yourself, for he 's been used to good keep, and so have his father and mother before him; and if you 've got a notion in your head of his being able to live as you live, upon a potato a day, why I give you fair warning that he won't stand it. Feed him properly, and he 'll be a faithful friend, and take care of your shop and your money: but no starvation!" And David promised, intending perhaps to keep his word. But his notions of good feed were so different from Boxer's, that Stephen's misgivings were completely realized. The poor puppy, haggard and empty, found his way to his old master's yard, and catching sight of Mrs. Lane, crept towards her and crouched down at her feet, looking so piteously in her face, and licking the hand with which she patted his rough honest head so imploringly, that Margaret, who never could bear to see any sort of creature in any distress that she could relieve, immediately fetched him a dinner, and stood by whilst he ate it; and, somehow or other, a tacit compact ensued between her and Boxer, that he should live with David Dykes—who, except in the matter of starving, was a kind master, —and come every day to her to be fed. And so it was settled, to the general satisfaction of all parties.

Boxer therefore continued the watchmaker's companion—his only companion: for although he once, in a fit of most unusual self-indulgence, contemplated taking an old woman as his housekeeper, to attend the shop when he went clock-cleaning into the country; light his fire during the very small portion of the year that he allowed himself such a luxury; make his bed—such as it was; cook his din-

ner—when he had one, and perform for him those offices wherein he had been accustomed to "minister unto himself;"—and although he actually went so far as to hire a poor woman of approved honesty in that capacity upon very satisfactory terms,—that is to say, for her board and a certain portion of old clothes, and no wages, yet her notions upon the subject of diet bearing a greater resemblance to Boxer's than her master's, and she having unluckily no Margaret Lane to resort to, she took herself off at the end of eight-and-forty hours, and sought refuge in the workhouse of St. Nicholas, the strictest in the town, as an actual land of plenty in comparison with the watchmaker's dwelling.

David—who, starved as she called herself, had thought her the greatest glutton in existence, and begrudged her every morsel that she put into her mouth—was glad enough of the riddance. Old as he was, his habits were too lonely and unsocial, too peculiar and too independent of the services of others, to find any comfort in attendance and company. To save half an inch of candle by going to bed in the dark, and a quarter of a pound of soap by washing his own linen without that usual companion-of the wash-tub; to borrow a needle and beg a bit of thread, and mend with his own hands his own stockings or his own shirt; to sew on the knees of his inexpressibles a button totally unlike the rest,—a metal button, for instance, when the others were bone,—or a bit of olive-coloured tape when the companion piece had once been drab; to patch his old brown coat with a bit of old black cloth; to clout his old shoes with a piece of leather picked up in the streets;—to save money, in short, by any of those contrivances and devices which the world calls most sordid, had to him an inexpressible savour. There was a chuckle of ineffable satisfaction when he had by such means avoided the expenditure of twopence; which proves that avarice has its pleasures high in degree, although low in kind. His delight in making a good bargain was of the same nature, and perhaps more exquisite, since the pride of successful cunning was added to the gratification of accumulation. A rise in the Three per Cents. was a less positive delight, since it was dashed with a considerable portion of anxiety; for if Consols rose one day, they might fall the next. But the joy of all joys, the triumph of all triumphs, was on his half-yearly journeys to London, accomplished partly on foot, partly by a cast in a cart or a wagon bestowed on him for charity, and partly by a sixpenny ride on the outside of a coach. Then, when first receiving and then buying in his dividends, and looking on his bank-receipts (those little bits of paper which replace so shabbily the tangible riches—the gold and precious stones which gave such gorgeousness to the delights of avarice, as represented in the old poets,)—then he felt, in its fullest extent, the highest ecstasy of which a miser is capable.

From the amount of these accumulations, successful speculations in loans or the money-market must have aided his scrapings and savings. Meeting him at the Bank, Stephen Lane became accidentally acquainted with the amount, and remonstrated with his usual good-humoured frankness on his not allowing himself the comforts he could so well afford. "Wait," replied David, "till it mounts to another plum, and then!"——Wait! and he was already turned of eighty!

For whom this fortune was destined, the owner himself would have found it difficult to say. His brother had long been dead, and his brother's son. The only survivor of the family was his grandnephew and namesake, a young David Dykes, who left the paternal farm and set up a showy haberdasher's shop in Belford. A showy young man he was himself; bold, speculating, adventurous, plausible; with a surface of good-humour and a substratum of selfishness.

"He 'll turn out a spendthrift," observed one day David the elder to our friend Stephen Lane.

"Or a miser," replied the butcher, doubtingly.

"We shall see," rejoined David, "whether he 'll take up the 20*l.* bill I cashed for him,—the first bill I ever cashed for anybody."

And as the grandnephew did not take up the bill, the granduncle, provoked at having been for the first time in his life overreached, instantly arrested him; and other creditors pouring in, he was confined in Belford gaol, with no other chance of release than the Insolvent Act and the consciousness of having irreparably offended his old relation.

Our miser, on his part, thought of nothing so much as of replacing the twenty pounds; redoubling for this purpose his industry, his abstemiousness, and his savings of every sort. It was a hard winter; but he allowed himself neither fire nor candle, nor meat nor beer, living as Boxer and the housekeeper had refused to live, on water and potatoes. Accordingly, on one frosty morning, the watchmaker was missed in his accustomed haunts—the shop was unopened—Boxer was heard howling within the house, and on breaking open the door the poor old man was found dead in his miserable bed.

No will could be discovered; and the kinsman whom he had caused to be arrested, the only person whom (thoroughly harmless and kindly in his general feeling) he had perhaps ever disliked in his life, came in as heir-at-law for his immense fortune and all his possessions,—except our friend Boxer, who wisely betook himself to his old refuge the butcher's yard, and his old protectress Margaret Lane.

David Dykes the younger realized his granduncle's predictions by getting through his fortune with incredible despatch; assisted in that meritorious purpose by every pursuit that ever has been devised for speeding a traveller on the Road to Ruin, and aided by the very worst company in town and country. Horses, hounds, carriages, the gaming-table, and the turf, had each a share in his undoing; and the consummation was at last reserved for a contested election, which he lost on the same day that his principal gambling companion ran away with a French opera-dancer, who had condescended to reside in his house, wear his jewels, and to spend his money.

Timon of Athens had never more cause to turn misanthrope; but misanthropy was too noble a disease to run in the Dykes' blood—their turn was different.

No sooner was our prodigal completely ruined, than he vindicated Stephen Lane's knowledge of character; for, having spent and sold everything except the hovel in which the money was accumulated, and which in his prosperity had been overlooked as too mean an object for the hammer of the auctioneer, he came back to Belford, like the Heir of Lynne to his ruined Grange, established himself in that identical old-clothes-shop, and found there, not indeed a hoard of gold, not a second ready-made fortune, but the power of amassing one by thrift and industry.

There he may be seen any day, buying, selling, and bartering, in much such a patched suit as his uncle's, wigged and spectacled like him,—I won't answer for the identity of the wig, but the spectacles must have been the very same pair which formerly adorned the nose of the original David,—just as saving, as scraping, as humble, as industrious, and, to sum up all, as miserly as his predecessor; looking as lean, as shrivelled, as care-worn, as crouching, and very nearly as old; and not at all unlikely—provided he also should, as your human anatomies so often do, wither on to the age of four-score,—by no means unlikely to accumulate a plum or two in his own proper person.

THE DISSENTING MINISTER.

"No, Victor! we shall never meet again. I feel that conviction burnt upon my very heart. We part now for the last time. You are returning to your own beautiful France, to your family, to your home: a captive released from his prison, an exile restored to his country, gay, fortunate, and happy—what leisure have you to think of the poor Jane?"

"You forget, Jane, that I am the soldier of a chief at war with all Europe, and that, in leaving England, I shall be sent instantly to fight fresh battles against some other nation. It is my only consolation that the conditions of my exchange forbid my being again opposed to your countrymen. I go, dearest, not to encounter the temptations of peace, but the hardships of war."

"The heroic hardships, the exciting dangers that you love so well! Be it so. Battle, victory, peril, or death, on the one hand;—on the other, the graces and the blandishments, the talents and the beauty of your lovely country-women! What chance is there that I should be remembered either in the turmoil of a campaign, or the gaiety of a capital? You will think of me (if indeed you should ever think of me at all) but as a part of the gloomiest scenes and the most cloudy days of your existence. As Belford contrasted with Paris, so shall I seem when placed in competition with some fair Parisian. No, Victor! we part, and I feel that we part for ever!"

"Cruel and unjust! Shall *you* forget *me?*"

"No! To remember when hope is gone, is the melancholy privilege of woman. Forget you! Oh that I could!"

"Well then, Jane, my own Jane, put an end at once to these doubts, to these suspicions. Come with me to France, to my home. My mother is not rich;—I am one of Napoleon's poorest captains; but he has deigned to notice me;—my promotion, if life be spared to me, is assured; and in the mean time, we have enough for competence, for happiness. Come with me, my own Jane—you whose affection has been my only comfort during two years of captivity, come and share the joys of my release! Nothing can be easier than your flight. No one suspects our attachment. Your father sleeps——"

"And you would have me abandon him! me, his only child! Alas! Victor, if we were to desert him in his old age, could *I* ever sleep again? Go! I am rightly punished for a love which, prejudiced as he is against your nation, I knew that he would condemn. It is fit that a clandestine attachment should end in desolation and misery. Go! but oh, dearest, talk no more of my accompanying you; say no more that you will return to claim me at the peace: both are alike impossible. Go, and be happy with some younger, fairer woman! Go, and forget the poor Jane!" And so saying, she gently disengaged her hand, which was clasped in both his, and passed quickly from the little garden where they stood into the house, where, for fear of discovery, Victor dared not follow her.

This dialogue, which, by the way, was held not as I have given it, in English, but in rapid and passionate French, took place at the close of a November evening in the autumn of 1808, between a young officer of the Imperial Army, on parole in Belford, and Jane Lanham, the only daughter, the only surviving child of old John Lanham, a corn-chandler in the town.

Victor d'Auberval, the officer in question,

was a young man of good education, considerable talent, and a lively and ardent character. He had been sent as a favour to Belford, together with four or five naval officers, with whom our *jeune militaire* had little in common besides his country and his misfortunes; and although incomparably better off than those of his *compatriotes* at Norman Cross and elsewhere, who solaced their leisure and relieved their necessities by cutting dominoes and other knick-knacks out of bone, and ornamenting baskets and boxes with flowers and landscapes composed of coloured straw, yet, being wholly unnoticed by the inhabitants of the town, and obliged, from the difficulty of obtaining remittances, to practise occasionally a very severe economy, he would certainly have become a victim to the English malady with a French name, styled *ennui*, had he not been preserved from that calamity by falling into the disease of all climates, called love.

Judging merely from outward circumstances, no one would seem less likely to captivate the handsome and brilliant Frenchman than Jane Lanham. Full four or five and twenty, and looking more, of a common height, common size, and, but for her beautiful dark eyes, common features,—her person, attired, as it always was, with perfect plainness and simplicity, had nothing to attract observation; and her station, as the daughter of a man in trade, himself a rigid dissenter, and living in frugal retirement, rendered their meeting at all anything but probable. And she, grave, orderly, staid, demure,—she that eschewed pink ribbons as if she had been a female Friend, and would have thought it some sin to wear a bow of any hue in her straw bonnet,—who would ever have dreamt of Jane Lanham being smitten with a tri-coloured cockade?

So the matter fell out.

John Lanham was, as we have said, a corn-chandler in Belford, and one who, in spite of his living in a small gloomy house, in a dark narrow lane leading from one great street to another, with no larger establishment than one maid of all work and a lad to take care of his horse and chaise, was yet reputed to possess considerable wealth. He was a dissenter of a sect rigid and respectable rather than numerous, and it was quoted in proof of his opulence, that in rebuilding the chapel which he attended, he had himself contributed the magnificent sum of three thousand pounds. He had lost several children in their infancy, and his wife had died in bringing Jane into the world: so that the father, grave, stern, and severe to others, was yet bound by the tenderest of all ties, that of her entire helplessness and dependence, to his motherless girl, and spared nothing that, under his peculiar views of the world, could conduce to her happiness and well-being.

His chief adviser and assistant in the little girl's education was his old friend Mr. Fenton, the minister of the congregation to which he belonged,—a man shrewd, upright, conscientious, and learned, but unfitted for his present post by two very important disqualifications: first, as an old bachelor who knew no more of the bringing up of children than of the training of race-horses; secondly, as having a complete and thorough contempt for the sex, whom he considered as so many animated dolls, or ornamented monkeys, frivolous and mischievous, and capable of nothing better than the fulfilment of the lowest household duties. "Teach her to read and to write," quoth Mr. Fenton, "to keep accounts, to cut out a shirt, to mend stockings, to make a pudding, and to stay within doors, and you will have done your duty."

According to this scale Jane's education seemed likely to be conducted, when a short visit from her mother's sister, just as she had entered her thirteenth year, made a slight addition to her studies. Her aunt, a sensible and cultivated woman, assuming that the young person who was growing up with ideas so limited was likely to inherit considerable property, would fain have converted Mr. Lanham to her own more enlarged and liberal views, have sent her to a good school, or have engaged an accomplished governess; but this attempt ended in a dispute that produced a total estrangement between the parties, and the only fruit of her remonstrances was the attendance of the good Abbé Villaret as a French master,—the study of French being, in the eyes both of Mr. Lanham and Mr. Fenton, a considerably less abomination than that of music, drawing, and dancing. "She'll make nothing of it," thought Mr. Fenton; "I myself did not, though I was at the expense of a grammar and a dictionary, and worked at it an hour a day for a month. She 'll make nothing of it, so she may as well try as not." And the Abbé was sent for, and the lessons begun.

This was a new era in the life of Jane Lanham. L'Abbé Villaret soon discovered through the veil of shyness, awkwardness, ignorance, and modesty, the great powers of his pupil. The difficulties of the language disappeared as by magic, and she whose English reading had been restricted to the commonest elementary books, with a few volumes of sectarian devotion, and "Watts's Hymns," (for poetry she had never known, except the magnificent poetry of the Scriptures, and the homely but heart-stirring imaginations of the "Pilgrim's Progress"), was now eagerly devouring the choicest and purest *morceaux* of French literature. Mr. Fenton having interdicted to the Abbé the use of any works likely to convert the young Protestant to the Catholic faith, and Mr. Lanham (who had never read one in his life) having added a caution against novels, Jane and her kind in-

structor were left in other respects free: her father, who passed almost every day in the pursuit of his business in the neighbouring towns, and his pastor, who only visited him in an evening, having no suspicion of the many, many hours which she devoted to the new-born delight of poring over books; and the Abbé knew so well how to buy books cheaply, and Mr. Lanham gave him money for her use with so little inquiry as to its destination, that she soon accumulated a very respectable French library.

What a new world for the young recluse! —Racine, Corneille, Crébillon, the tragedies and histories of Voltaire, the picturesque revolutions of Vertôt, the enchanting letters of Madame de Sévigné, the Causes Célèbres (more interesting than any novels), the Mémoires de Sully (most striking and most *naïf* of histories), Télémaque, the young Anacharsis, the purest comedies of Molière and Regnard, the Fables de La Fontaine, the poems of Delille and of Boileau, the Vert-vert of Gresset, Le Père Brumoy's Théâtre des Grecs, Madame Dacier's Homer,—these, and a hundred books like these, burst as a freshly-acquired sense upon the shy yet ardent girl. It was like the recovery of sight to one become blind in infancy; and the kindness of the Abbé, who delighted in answering her inquiries and directing her taste, increased a thousand-fold the profit and the pleasure which she derived from her favourite authors.

Excepting her good old instructor, she had no confidant. Certain that they would feel no sympathy in her gratification, she never spoke of her books either to her father or Mr. Fenton; and they, satisfied with M. l'Abbé's calm report of her attention to his lessons, made no further inquiries. Her French studies were, she felt, for herself, and herself alone; and when his tragical death deprived her of the friend and tutor whom she had so entirely loved and respected, reading became more and more a solitary pleasure. Outwardly calm, silent, and retiring,—an affectionate daughter, an excellent housewife, and an attentive hostess,—she was Mr. Fenton's *beau idéal* of a young woman. Little did he suspect the glowing, enthusiastic, and concentrated character that lurked under that cold exterior—the fire that was hidden under that white and virgin snow. Purer than she really was he could not fancy her; but never would he have divined how much of tenderness and firmness was mingled with that youthful purity, or how completely he had himself, by a life of restraint and seclusion, prepared her mind to yield to an engrossing and lasting passion.

Amongst her beloved French books, those which she preferred were undoubtedly the tragedies, the only dramas which had ever fallen in her way, and which exercised over her imagination the full power of that most striking and delightful of any species of literature. We who know Shakspeare,—who have known him from our childhood, and are, as it were, "to *his* manner born,"—feel at once that, compared with that greatest of poets, the "belles tirades" of Racine and of Corneille are cold, and false, and wearisome; but to one who had no such standard by which to measure the tragic dramatists of France, the mysterious and thrilling horrors of the old Greek stories which their tragedies so frequently embodied,—the woes of Thebes, the fated line of Pelops, the passion of Phædra, and the desolation of Antigone,—were full of a strange and fearful power. Nor was the spell confined to the classical plays. The "Tragedies Chrétiennes"—Esther and Athalie,—Polyeucte and Alzire—excited at least equal interest; while the contest between love and "la force du sang," in The Cid, and Zaïre, struck upon her with all the power of a predestined sympathy. She felt that she herself was born to such a trial; and the presentiment was perhaps, as so often happens, in no small degree the cause of its own accomplishment.

The accident by which she became acquainted with Victor d'Auberval may be told in a very few words.

The nurse who had taken her on the death of her mother, and who still retained for her the strong affection so often inspired by foster children, was the wife of a respectable publican in Queen-street; and being of excellent private character, and one of Mr. Fenton's congregation, was admitted to see Jane whenever she liked, in a somewhat equivocal capacity between a visiter and dependant.

One evening she came in great haste to say that a Bristol coach which inned at the Red Lion had just dropped there two foreigners, a man and a woman, one of whom seemed to her fancy dying, whilst both appeared miserably poor, and neither could speak a word to be understood. Would her dear child come and interpret for the sick lady?

Jane went immediately. They were Italian musicians, on their way to Bristol, where they hoped to meet a friend and to procure employment. In the meanwhile, the illness of the wife had stopped them on their journey; and their slender funds were, as the husband modestly confessed, little calculated to encounter the expenses of medical assistance and an English inn.

Jane promised to represent the matter to her father, who, although hating Frenchmen and papists (both of which he assumed the foreigners to be) with a hatred eminently British and protestant, was yet too good a Christian to refuse moderate relief to fellow-creatures in distress; and between Mr. Lanham's contributions and the good landlady's kindness, and what Jane could spare from her own frugally-supplied purse, the poor Italians (for they

were singers from Florence) were enabled to bear up during a detention of many days.

Before they resumed their journey, their kind interpreter had heard from the good hostess that they had found another friend, almost as poor as themselves, and previously unacquainted with them, in a French officer on parole in the town, to whom the simple fact of their being foreigners in distress in a strange land had supplied the place of recommendation or introduction; and when going the next day, laden with a few comforts for the invalids, to bid them farewell and to see them off, she met, for the first time, the young officer, who had been drawn by similar feelings to the door of the Red Lion.

It was a bitter December day—one of those north-east winds which seem to blow through you, and which hardly any strength can stand; and as the poor Italian in a thin summer waistcoat and a threadbare coat, took his seat on the top of the coach, shivering from head to foot, and his teeth already chattering amidst the sneers of the bear-skinned coachman, muffled up to his ears, and his warmly-clad fellow-passengers, Victor took off his own great-coat, tossed it smilingly to the freezing musician, and walked rapidly away as the coach drove off, uttering an exclamation somewhat similar to Sir Philip Sidney's at Zutphen —"He wants it more than I do."*

My friend Mr. Serle has said, in one of the finest plays of this century,—richer in great plays, let the critics rail as they will, than any age since the time of Elizabeth and her immediate successor;—Mr. Serle, speaking of the master-passion, has said, in "The Merchant of London,"—

> "How many doors or entrances hath love
> Into the heart?—
> As many as the senses:
> All are love's portals; though, when the proudest comes,
> He comes as conquerors use, by his own path—
> And sympathy 's that breach."

And this single instance of sympathy and fellow-feeling (for the grateful Italians had spoken of Miss Lanham's kindness to M. d'Auberval) sealed the destiny of two warm hearts.

Victor soon contrived to get introduced to Jane, by their mutual friend, the landlady of the Red Lion; and, after that introduction, he managed to meet her accidentally whenever there was no chance of interruption or discovery; which, as Jane had always been in the habit of taking long, solitary walks, happened, it must be confessed, pretty often. He was charmed at the piquant contrast between her shy, retiring manners, and her ardent and enthusiastic character; and his national vivacity found a high gratification in her proficiency in, and fondness for, his language and literature; whilst she (so full of contradictions is love) found no less attraction in his ignorance of English. She liked to have something to teach her quick and lively pupil; and he repaid her instructions by enlarging her knowledge of French authors,—by introducing to her the beautiful though dangerous pages of Rousseau, the light and brilliant writers of memoirs, and the higher devotional eloquence of Bossuet, Massillon, and Bourdaloue,—the Lettres Spirituelles of Fénélon, and the equally beautiful, though very different, works of Le Père Pascal.

So time wore on. The declaration of love had been made by one party; and the confession that that love was returned had been reluctantly extorted from the other. Of what use was that confession? Never, as Jane declared, would she marry to displease her father;—and how, knowing as she well did all his prejudices, could she hope for his consent to a union with a prisoner, a soldier, a Frenchman, a Catholic? Even Victor felt the impossibility.

Still neither could forego the troubled happiness of these stolen interviews, chequered as they were with present alarms and future fears. Jane had no confidant. The reserve and perhaps the pride of her character prevented her confessing even to her affectionate nurse a clandestine attachment. But she half feared that her secret was suspected at least, if not wholly known, by Mr. Fenton; and if known to him, assuredly it would be disclosed to her father; and the manner in which a worthy, wealthy, and disagreeable London suitor was pressed on her by both, (for hitherto Mr. Lanham had seemed averse to her marrying,) confirmed her in the apprehension.

Still, however, they continued to meet, until suddenly, and without any warning, the exchange that restored him to his country and tore him from her who had been his consolation in captivity, burst on them like a thunderclap; and then Jane, with all the inconsistency of a woman's heart, forgot her own vows never to marry him without the consent of her father,—forgot how impossible it appeared that that consent should ever be obtained, and dwelt wholly on the fear of his inconstancy —on the chance of his meeting some fair, and young, and fascinating Frenchwoman, and forgetting his own Jane; whilst he again and again pledged himself, when peace should come, to return to Belford and carry home in triumph the only woman he could ever love. Until that happy day, they agreed, in the absence of any safe medium of communication, that it would be better not to write; and so, in the midst of despondency on the one side, and ardent and sincere protestations on the other, they parted.

Who shall describe Jane's desolation during the long and dreary winter that succeeded

* St. Martin was canonized for an act altogether similar to that of Victor d'Auberval.

their separation? That her secret was known, or at least strongly suspected, appeared to her certain; and she more than guessed that her father's forbearance in not putting into words the grieved displeasure which he evidently felt, was owing to the kind but crabbed old bachelor Mr. Fenton, whose conduct towards herself—or rather, whose opinion of her powers, appeared to have undergone a considerable change, and who, giving her credit for strength of mind, seemed chiefly bent on spurring her on to exert that strength to the utmost. He gave proof of that knowledge of human nature which the dissenting ministers so frequently possess, by seeking to turn her thoughts into a different channel; and by bringing her Milton and Cowper, and supplying her with English books of history and theology, together with the lives of many pious and eminent men of his own persuasion, succeeded not only in leading her into an interesting and profitable course of reading, but in beguiling her into an unexpected frankness of discussion on the subject of her new studies.

In these discussions, he soon found the talent of the young person whom he had so long undervalued; and constant to his contempt for the sex, (a heresy from which a man who has fallen into it seldom recovers,) began to consider her as a splendid exception to the general inanity of a woman; a good opinion which received further confirmation from her devoted attention to her father, who was seized with a lingering illness about a twelvemonth after the departure of Victor, of which he finally died, after languishing for nearly two years, kept alive only by the tender and incessant cares of his daughter, and the sympathizing visits of his friend.

On opening the will, his beloved daughter, Jane, was found sole heiress to a fortune of 70,000*l.*;—unless she should intermarry with a soldier, a papist, or a foreigner, in which case the entire property was bequeathed unreservedly to the Rev. Samuel Fenton, to be disposed of by him according to his sole will and pleasure.

Miss Lanham was less affected by this clause than might have been expected. Three years had now elapsed from the period of separation; and she had been so well obeyed, as never to have received one line from Victor d'Auberval. She feared that he was dead; she tried to hope that he was unfaithful; and the tremendous number of officers that had fallen in Napoleon's last battles, rendered the former by far the more probable catastrophe:—even if he had not previously fallen, the Russian campaign threatened extermination to the French army; and poor Jane, in whose bosom hope had long lain dormant, hardly regarded this fresh obstacle to her unhappy love. She felt that her's was a widowed heart, and that her future comfort must be sought in the calm pleasures of literature, and in contributing all that she could to the happiness of others.

Attached to Belford by long habit, and by the recollection of past happiness and past sorrows, she continued in her old dwelling, making little other alteration in her way of life, than that of adding two or three servants to her establishment, and offering a home to her mother's sister—the aunt to whose intervention she owed the doubtful good of that proficiency in French which had introduced her to Victor, and whom unforeseen events had now reduced to absolute poverty.

In her she found an intelligent and cultivated companion; and in her society and that of Mr. Fenton, and in the delight of a daily increasing library, her days passed calmly and pleasantly; when, in spite of all her resolutions, her serenity was disturbed by the victories of the Allies, the fall of Napoleon, the capture of Paris, and the peace of Europe. Was Victor dead or alive, faithless or constant? Would he seek her? and seeing her, what would be his disappointment at the clause that parted them for ever? Ought she to remain in Belford? Was there no way of ascertaining his fate?

She was revolving these questions for the hundredth time, when a knock was heard at the door, and the servant announced Colonel d'Auberval.

There is no describing such meetings. After sketching rapidly his fortunes since they parted; how he had disobeyed her by writing, and how he had since found that his letters had miscarried; and after brief assurances that in his eyes she was more than ever charming, had gained added grace, expression, and intelligence,—Jane began to communicate to him, at first with much agitation, afterwards with collected calmness, the clause in the will by which she forfeited all her property in marrying him.

"Is it not cruel," added she, "to have lost the power of enriching him whom I love?"

"You do love me, then, still?" exclaimed Victor. "Blessings on you for that word! You are still constant?"

"Constant! Oh, if you could have seen my heart during these long, long years! If you could have imagined how the thought of you mingled with every recollection, every feeling, every hope! But to bring you a penniless wife, Victor—for even the interest of this money since my father's death, which might have been a little portion, I have settled upon my poor aunt: to take advantage of your generosity, and burthen you with a dowerless wife,—never handsome, no longer young, inferior to you in every way,—ought I to do so? Would it be just? would it be right? Answer me, Victor."

"Rather tell me, would it be just and right to deprive *you* of the splendid fortune you would use so well? Would you, for my sake,

for love, and for competence, forego the wealth which is your own?"

"Would I? Oh, how can you ask!"

"Will you, then, my own Jane? Say yes, dearest, and never will we think of this money again. I have a mother worthy to be yours—a mother who will love and value you as you deserve to be loved; and an estate with a small chateau at the foot of the Pyrenees, beautiful enough to make an emperor forget his throne. Share it with me, and we shall be happier in that peaceful retirement than ever monarch was or can be! You love the country. You have lost none of the simplicity which belonged to you, alike from taste and from habit. You will not miss these riches?"

"Oh, no! no!"

"And you will be mine, dearest and faithfullest? Mine, heart and hand? Say yes, mine own Jane!"

And Jane did whisper, between smiles and tears, that "yes," which her faithful lover was never weary of hearing: and in a shorter time than it takes to tell it, all the details of the marriage were settled.

In the evening, Mr. Fenton, whom Miss Lanham had invited to tea, arrived; and in a few simple words, Jane introduced Colonel d'Auberval, explained their mutual situation, and declared her resolution of relinquishing immediately the fortune which, by her father's will, would be triply forfeited by her union with a soldier, a foreigner, and a Catholic.

"And your religion?" inquired Mr. Fenton, somewhat sternly.

"Shall ever be sacred in my eyes," replied Victor, solemnly. "My own excellent mother is herself a Protestant and a Calvinist. There is a clergyman of that persuasion at Bayonne. She shall find every facility for the exercise of her own mode of worship. I should love her less, if I thought her capable of change."

"Well, but this money:—Are you sure, young man, that you yourself will not regret marrying a portionless wife?"

"Quite sure. I knew nothing of her fortune. It was a portionless wife that I came hither to seek."

"And you, Jane? Can you abandon this wealth, which, properly used, comprises in itself the blessed power of doing good, of relieving misery, of conferring happiness? Can you leave your home, your country, and your friends?"

"Oh, Mr. Fenton!" replied Jane, "I shall regret none but you. His home will be my home, his country my country. My dear aunt will, I hope, accompany us; I shall leave nothing that I love but you, my second father. And for this fortune, which, used as it should be used, is indeed a blessing—do I not leave it in *your* hands? And am I not sure that with you it will be a fund for relieving misery and conferring happiness? I feel that if, at this moment, he whom I have lost could see into my heart, he would approve my resolution, and would bless the man who had shown such disinterested affection for his child."

"In his name and my own, *I* bless you, my children," rejoined Mr. Fenton; "and as his act and my own do I restore to you the forfeited money. No refusals, young man!—no arguments! no thanks! It is yours, and yours only. Listen to me, Jane. This will, for which any one less generous and disinterested than yourself would have hated me, was made, as you must have suspected, under my direction. I had known from your friend, the hostess of the Red Lion, of your mutual attachment; and was on the point of putting a stop to your interviews, when an exchange, unexpected by all parties, removed M. d'Auberval from Belford. After your separation, it would have been inflicting needless misery to have reproached you with an intercourse which we had every reason to believe completely at an end. I prevailed on my good friend to conceal his knowledge of the engagement, and tried all I could to turn your thoughts into a different channel. By these means I became gradually acquainted with your firmness and strength of mind, your ardour and your sensibility; and having made minute and searching inquiries into the character of your lover, I began to think, little as an old bachelor is supposed to know of those matters, that an attachment between two such persons was likely to be an attachment for life; and I prevailed on Mr. Lanham to add to his will the clause that you have seen, that we might prove the disinterestedness as well as the constancy of the lovers. Both are proved," continued the good old man, a smile of the purest benevolence softening his rugged features, "both are proved to my entire satisfaction; and soldier, Frenchman, and Papist though he be, the sooner I join your hands and get quit of this money, the better. Not a word, my dear Jane, unless to fix the day. Surely you are not going to compliment me for doing my duty! I don't know how I shall part with her, though, well as you deserve her," continued he, turning to Colonel d'Auberval; "you must bring her sometimes to Belford." And, passing the back of his withered hand across his eyes to brush off the unusual softness, the good dissenting minister walked out of the room.

BELFORD RACES.

Belford Races, — *The* Races, as the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood were pleased to call them, as if they had been the Races *par excellence* of the kingdom, surpassing Epsom, and Ascot, and Doncaster, and

New-market, instead of being the most trumpery meeting that ever brought horses to run for a plate—are, I am happy to say, a non-existing nuisance. The only good that I ever knew done by an enclosure act was the putting an end to that iniquity.

Generally speaking, enclosures seem to me lamentable things. They steal away from the landscape, the patches of woodland, the shady nooks and tangled dingles, the wild heathy banks and primrosy dells, the steep ravines and deep irregular pools,—all, in short, that the artist loves to paint and the poet to fancy, —all that comes into our thoughts when we talk of the country; and they give us, instead, hedge-rows without a tree, fields cut into geometrical lines, and Macadamized roads, which, although as straight and as ugly as the most thoroughgoing utilitarian can desire, do yet contrive to be more inconvenient and farther about than the picturesque by-ways of the elder time. Moreover, let political philosophy preach as it will, an enclosure bill is a positive evil to the poor. They lose by it the turf and furze for their fuel, — the odd nooks adjoining their cottages, which they sometimes begged from the lord of the manor, and sometimes, it must be confessed, took without that preliminary courtesy, (I wish all thefts were as innocent,) to cultivate for a garden; whilst the advantage of a village green to their little stock of pigs and poultry was incalculable. But all this is beside my purpose. However, according to the well-known epigram, "to steal a common from a goose," may be an evil, to steal a common from the Races must be a good; and when the enclosure of Belford Heath put an end to that wearisome annual festivity, I believe verily that there were not twenty people about the place who did not rejoice in the loss of those dullest of all dull gaieties.

Even the great Races are tiresome things: they last so long, and of the amusement, such as it is, you see so little. Moreover, the weather is never good: it is sure to be dusty, or showery, or windy, or sunny; sometimes it is too hot, generally it is too cold;—I never knew it right in my life. Then, although the crowd is such that it seems as if all the world were on the ground, you are quite sure never to meet the person you want to see, and have very often the provoking mortification of finding, by one of those accidents which at races always happen, that you have missed each other by five minutes. The vaunted company is nothing compared with the Zoological Gardens on a Sunday. You lose your party—you have to wait for your servants—you lame your horses—you scratch your carriage—you spoil your new bonnet, you tear your best pelisse—you come back tired, and hungry, and cross,—you catch a cold or a fever; and your only compensation for all these evils is, that you have the power of saying to some neighbour wise enough to stay at home,—"I have been to the races!"

These calamities, however, belong to the grand meetings, where horses of name and fame ridden by jockeys of equal renown, run for the Derby, the Oaks, or the St. Leger; where ladies win French gloves and gentlemen lose English estates; where you are at all events sure of a crowd, and pretty sure of a crowd of beauty and fashion; where, if your pocket be picked, it is ten to one but a lord is equally unlucky; and if you get drenched by a shower, you have the comfort of seeing a countess in the same condition.

Our Belford afflictions were of a different sort. The Heath, which, contrary to the general picturesqueness of commons, was a dull, flat, low, unprofitable piece of ground, wholly uninteresting in itself, and commanding no view of any sort, had been my aversion as long as I could remember; having been for many years the scene of those reviews of volunteers and yeomanry, presentations of colours, and so forth, which formed the delight of his majesty's noise-loving subjects, and were to me, "who hated the sound of a gun like a hurt wild-duck," the objects of mingled dread and detestation, — the more especially as, besides its being in those days reckoned a point of loyalty not to miss such exhibitions, people used to inculcate it as a duty to take me amongst guns, and drums, and trumpets, by way of curing my cowardice.*

* Courage is a strange, capricious thing. I am still such a coward with regard to the mere noise, not the danger of gunpowder, that the very first words I ever spoke to Mr. Macready, who was superintending the rehearsal of one of my tragedies, contained an earnest entreaty that he would not allow a gun, which I had unwarily introduced, to be fired; and that being subsequently at a theatre with a friend and her little boy, whom it would have been cruel to have taken away, I sat in such agony during a melodrame in which a cannon was dragged about for two long acts, that a very respectable-looking gentleman, who had been sitting behind us much amused by my head-ducking and ear-stopping when the firing seemed inevitable, fairly wished me joy of having survived the piece as he made room for us to go out. Such is my cowardice —and luckily cowardice is a female privilege; whilst, on the other hand, I am so fearless amongst much greater dangers by land and by water, as rather to enjoy the fright of other ladies in a crazy sailing-boat, and to have occasioned considerable alarm to the late Lord Rivers and his keepers by caressing his fierce and high-blooded greyhounds, and walking about the kennel amongst twenty brace of them as freely as their feeders; and once almost won the heart of a gentleman driving his own four blood-horses, (I had very nearly called him a coachman,) on the box with whom I was accidentally seated, and who, in the middle of a race with a real stage-coach, whilst going full gallop, with his *insides* screaming out of the windows, happened to recollect that he had promised to have especial care of me, and inquired apologetically if I were frightened,—by replying *con spirito*—"Frightened! Not at all! Get on! Beat them!" I suppose it is that the imagination exaggerates the expected shock; for when a gun is fired near me without my previous knowledge, I merely start and laugh like

Once I had the pleasure of baffling their good intentions. It was a fine day in the midsummer holidays, and my dear mother taking a young lady with her in the carriage, I rode with my father in the gig, he having been tormented by some sage adviser into taking me into the field, and thinking that the most palatable manner; and I so ordered matters by mere dint of coaxing, that happening to be early on the ground, I prevailed on my dear companion to turn back, and drive me home again before the arrival of the reviewing general; thus escaping the shock of the salute after the fashion of the patient who, being ordered to take a shower-bath, jumped out before pulling the string.

Well, this ugly piece of ground numbered amongst its demerits that of being the worst race-course in England. Flat as it looked, it was found on examination to be full of inequalities, going up hill and down hill just in the very parts where, for certain reasons which I do not pretend to understand, (all my knowledge of the turf being gathered from the early part of Holcroft's Memoirs, one of the most amusing pieces of autobiography in the language,) it ought to have been as level as a rail-road. Then, for as dry as it seemed—a dull expanse of dwarf furze and withered heath, there were half-a-dozen places so incurably boggy, that once in a sham fight at a review half a company of the Belford Volunteer Legion sunk knee-deep, to their own inexpressible consternation, the total derangement of the order of battle, and the utter ruin of their white spatterdashes: and in order to avoid these marshy spots, certain awkward bends occurred in the course, which made as great demands on the skill of the jockeys as the sticking fast of his troops had done on the tactics of the reviewing general. In a word, as a race-course Belford Heath was so detestable, that a race-horse of any reputation would have been ashamed to show his face there.

Then the only circumstance that could nave reconciled the owners of good horses to a bad course—high stakes and large subscriptions—were totally wanting. There was, to be sure, a County Member's Plate and a Town Member's Plate, and the Belford Stakes and the Hunt Stakes; and a popular high-sheriff, or a candidate for the borough or the county, who had a mind to be popular,—or some Londoner, freshly imported, who thought supporting the races a part of his new duties as a country gentleman,—would get up something like a subscription: but nothing could be less tempting than the rewards held out to the winners, and but for the speculations of certain horse-dealers, who reckoned on its being advantageous to the sale of a horse to have won a plate even at Belford, the races would undoubtedly have fallen to the ground from the mere absence of racers.

As it was, they languished on from year to year, every season worse than the last, with no company except the families of the neighbourhood, no sporting characters, no gentlemen of the turf, no betting-stand, no blacklegs, no thimble-people, no mob. The very *rouge et noir* table did not think it worth its while to appear; and although there was a most convenient pond for ducking such delinquents, I do not even remember to have heard of a pick-pocket on the race-course.

The diversion was, as I have said, confined to the neighbourhood; and they, poor innocent people, were, for the three days that the affair lasted, kept close to that most fatiguing of all work, country dissipation. The meeting was held early in September, and the hours having undergone no change since its first establishment a century before, it was what is termed an afternoon race: accordingly, besides a public breakfast at ten o'clock in the Town-hall, there was an ordinary at two at the Swan Hotel for ladies as well as gentlemen: then everybody drove at four to the course; then everybody came back to dress for the ball; and on the middle evening, when luckily there was no ball, everybody was expected to go to the play. And to miss, only for one day, the race-course, or the two balls, or the middle play, was an affront to the stewards and the stewards' wives,—to the members who dared not be absent—to the young ladies, who, not of sufficient rank or fortune to be presented to court, first made their appearance at this august reunion of fashion and beauty—to the papas, mammas, and maiden aunts, to whom the ceremony was important,—to the whole neighbourhood and the whole country. The public breakfasts and ordinaries were not *de rigueur*; but three races, two balls, and one play, were duties that must be fulfilled, punishments that must be undergone by all who desired to stand well in country society: to have attempted to evade them,—to have dared to think for yourself in a matter of amusement, would have been to run the risk of being thought over-wise, or over-good, or parsimonious, or poor. And as no one likes the three first of these nicknames, and it is only rich people who can afford to be suspected of poverty, dull as the diversions were, and *triste* as the gaieties, we were content to leave shade, and coolness, and quiet, and to pass three of the hottest days of early autumn amid fatigue and dust, and sun and crowd, on the very same wise principle of imitation which makes a flock of geese follow the gander.

Lightly as the county was apt to set by the town, the inhabitants of Belford were of no small use on this occasion. They helped

other people: but still the extreme cowardice in the one case, and the total absence of it in others, does seem somewhat puzzling.

(like supernumeraries on the stage) to fill the ball-room and the theatre; and thinly covered as the race-course was, it would have looked emptier still but for the handsome coach of the Misses Morris—for Miss Blackall's chariot, with her black servant in his gayest livery and her pet poodle in his whitest coat on the box, and Mrs. Colby snugly intrenched in the best corner—for Stephen Lane and dear Margaret in their huge one-horse chaise, with a pretty grand-child betwixt them—for King Harwood galloping about the ground in ten places at once—for the tradespeople and artisans of the place, (I do love a holiday for them, whatever name it bears—they have too few,) down to the poor chimney-sweepers and their donkey, taking more interest in the sport than their betters, and enjoying it full as much.

Still the town ladies were little better than the figurante, the Coryphees in this grand ballet,—the young county damsels were the real heroines of the scene; and it was to show them off that their mammas and their waiting-women, their milliners and their coachmakers, devoted all their cares; and amongst the fair candidates for admiration few were more indefatigably fine, more perseveringly fashionable, more constant to all sorts of provincial gaiety, whether race, concert, play or ball, than the Misses Elphinstone of Ashley, who had been for ten years, and perhaps a little longer, two of the reigning belles of the county.

Why it should be so, one does not well know, but half the ladies of H——shire used to meet every Monday between the hours of three and five in the Market-place of Belford. It was the constant female rendezvous; on Saturday, the market-day, the gentlemen came into town to attend the Bench,—some on horseback, some in gigs, the style of the equipage not unfrequently in an inverse ratio to the consequence of the owner; your country gentlemen of large fortune being often addicted to riding some scrubby pony, or driving some old shabby set-out, which a man of less certain station would be ashamed to be seen in: so that their appearance harmonized perfectly well with the carts and wagons of their tenants, the market-people of Belford. Their wives and daughters, however, indulged in no such whims. True to the vanities of the dear sex, laudably constant to fineries of all sorts, as regular as Monday* came were they to be seen in carriages the most fashionable, drawn by the handsomest horses that coaxing or lecturing could extort from their husbands and fathers, crowded round the shop-door of Mr. Dobson, linen-draper and haberdasher, the most approved factor of female merchandise, and the favourite minister to female caprice in the whole county of H————; and amongst the many equipages which clustered about this grand mart of provincial fashion, none were more punctual and few better appointed, than that of the Elphinstones of Ashley.

Mr. Elphinstone was a gentleman of large landed property; but the estate being considerably involved and strictly entailed, and the eldest son showing no desire to assist in its extrication, he was in point of fact a much poorer man than many of his neighbours with less than half of his nominal income. His wife, a lady of good family, had been what is called a fine woman; by which is understood, a tall, showy figure, good hair, good teeth, good eyes, a tolerable complexion, and a face that comes somewhat short of what is commonly reckoned handsome. According to this definition, Mrs. Elphinstone had been, and her daughters were two fine women; and as they dressed well, were excellent dancers, had a good deal of air and style, and were at least half a head taller than the other young ladies of the county, they seldom failed to attract considerable admiration in the ball-room.

That their admirers went at the most no farther than a transient flirtation, is to be accounted for, not so much from any particular defect in the young ladies, who were pretty much like other show-off girls, but by the certainty of their being altogether portionless. Very few men can afford to select wives with high notions and no fortune; and unwomanly and unmaidenly as the practice of husband-hunting is, whether in mothers or daughters, there is at least something of mitigation in the situation of young women like Gertrude and Julia Elphinstone,—accustomed to every luxury and indulgence, to all the amusements and refinement of cultivated society, and yet placed in such a position, that if not married before the death of their parents, they are thrown on the charity of their relations for the mere necessaries of life. With this prospect before their eyes, their anxiety to be settled certainly admits of some extenuation; and yet in most cases, and certainly in the present, that very anxiety is but too likely to defeat its object.

Year after year passed away;—Mr. Elphinstone's family, consisting, besides the young ladies whom I have already mentioned, of four or five younger lads in the army, the navy, at College, and at school, and of a weakly girl, who, having been sent to be nursed at a distant relation's, the wife of a gentleman farmer at some distance, still remained in that convenient but ignoble retreat, became every year more and more expensive; whilst the chances of his daughters' marriage diminished with their increasing age and his

*Why Monday should be the chosen day, no one can tell. It is the day on which the poor country-women make their little purchases, because their husbands being paid on a Saturday night, they have then a pittance to spare. But why the ladies should choose that day, is still a puzzle.

decreasing income. The annual journey to London had been first shortened, then abandoned; visits to Brighton and Cheltenham, and other places of fashionable resort, became less frequent; and the Belford Races, where, in spite of Mr. Elphinstone's repeated embarrassments, they still flourished among the county belles, became their principal scene of exhibition.

Race-ball after race-ball, however, came and departed, and brought nothing in the shape of a suitor to the expecting damsels. Partners for the dance presented themselves in plenty, but partners for life were still to seek. And Mrs. Elphinstone, in pettish despair, was beginning, on the first evening of the very last year of the Races, to rejoice at the prospect of their being given up; to discover that the balls were fatiguing, the course dreary, and the theatre dull; that the whole affair was troublesome and tiresome; that it was in the very worst taste to be running after so paltry an amusement at the rate of sixteen hours a day for three successive days;—when, in the very midst of her professions of disgust and indifference, as she was walking up the assembly-room with her eldest daughter hanging on her arm (Miss Julia, a little indisposed and a little tired, not with the crowd, but with the emptiness of the race-ground, having chosen to stay at home), her hopes were suddenly revived by being told in a very significant manner by one of the stewards, that Lord Lindore had requested of him the honour of being presented to her daughter. "He had seen her in the carriage that afternoon," said the friendly master of the ceremonies, with a very intelligible smile, and an abrupt stop as the rapid advance of the young gentleman interrupted his speech and turned his intended confidence into——"My Lord, allow me the pleasure of introducing you to Miss Elphinstone."

Mr. Clavering's suspicions were pretty evident, and although the well-bred and self-commanded chaperone contrived to conceal her comprehension of his hints, and preserved the most decorous appearance of indifference, she yet managed to extract from her kind neighbour, that the elegant young nobleman who was leading the fair Gertrude to the dance was just returned from a tour in Greece and Germany, and being on his way to an estate about thirty miles off in the vale of Berkshire, had been struck on accidentally visiting the Belford race-course by the beauty of a young lady in an open landau, and having ascertained that the carriage belonged to Mr. Elphinstone, and that the family would certainly attend the ball, he had stayed, as it seemed, for the sole purpose of being introduced. "So at least says report," added Mr. Clavering; and for once report said true.

Lord Lindore was a young nobleman of large but embarrassed property, very good talents, and very amiable disposition; who was, in spite of his many excellent qualities, returning loiteringly and reluctantly home to one of the best and cleverest mothers in the world: and a less fair reason than the sweet and blooming face which peeped out so brightly from under the brim of her cottage-bonnet, (for cottage-bonnets were the fashion of that distant day,) would have excused him to himself for a longer delay than that of the race-ball; his good mother, kind and clever as she was, having by a letter entreating his speedy return contrived to make that return as unpleasant as possible to her affectionate and dutiful son,—who, as a dutiful and affectionate son, obediently turned his face towards Glenham Abbey, whilst as a spoilt child and a peer of the realm, and in those two characters pretty much accustomed to carry matters his own way, he managed to make his obedience as dawdling and as dilatory as possible.

The letter which had produced this unlucky effect was an answer to one written by himself from Vienna, announcing the dissolution of a matrimonial engagement with a pretty Austrian, who had jilted him for the purpose of marrying a Count of the Holy Roman Empire old enough to be her grandfather:—on which event Lord Lindore, whose susceptibility to female charms was so remarkable that ever since he had attained the age of sixteen he had been in love with some damsel or other, and had been twenty times saved from the most preposterous matches by the vigilance of his tutors and the care of his fond mother, gravely felicitated himself on being emancipated, then and for ever, from the dominion of beauty; and declared that if ever he could love again,—which he thought unlikely—he should seek for nothing in woman but the unfading graces of the mind. Lady Lindore's reply contained a warm congratulation on her son's release from the chains of an unprincipled coquette, and from the evils of an alliance with a foreigner; adding, that she rejoiced above all to find that his heart was again upon his hands, since on the winding up of his affairs, preparatory to his coming of age, his guardians and herself had discovered that, long as his minority had been, the accumulations consequent thereupon were entirely swallowed up by the payment of his sisters' portions; and the mortgages that encumbered his property could only be cleared away by the sale of the beautiful demesne on which she resided during his absence abroad, and which, although the estate that had been longest in the family, was the only one not strictly entailed,—or by the less painful expedient of a wealthy marriage.—"And now that your heart is free," continued Lady Lindore, "there can be but little doubt which measure you will adopt; the more especially as I have a young lady in view, whose talents and attainments are of no common order, whose temper and

disposition are most amiable, and who wants nothing but that outward beauty which you have at last been taught to estimate at its just value. Plain as you may possibly think her, her attractions of mind are such as to compensate most amply for the absence of more perishable charms; whilst her fortune is so large that it would clear off all mortgages, without involving the wretched necessity of parting with this venerable mansion, which you have scarcely seen since you were a child, but which is alike precious as a proud memorial of family splendour, and as one of the finest old buildings in the kingdom. The lady's friends are most desirous of the connexion, and she herself loves me as a daughter. The path is straight before you. Return, therefore, as speedily as possible, my dear Arthur; and remember, whatever perils from bright eyes and rosy cheeks may beset you on your way, that I expect from your duty and your affection that you will not commit yourself either by word or deed, by open professions or silent assiduities, until you have had an opportunity, not merely of seeing, but of becoming intimately acquainted with the amiable and richly-gifted young person whom, of all the women I have ever known, I would most readily select as your bride. Come, then, my dearest Arthur, and come speedily to your affectionate mother,

MARY LINDORE."

How so clear-headed a woman as Lady Lindore could write a letter so likely to defeat its own obvious purpose, and to awaken the spirit of contradiction in the breast of a young man who, with all his acknowledged kindness of temper, had never been found wanting in a petulant self-will, would be difficult to explain, except upon the principle that the cleverest people often do the silliest things;—a maxim, from the promulgation of which so very many well-meaning persons derive pleasure, that to contradict it, even if one could do so conscientiously, would be to deprive a very large and estimable portion of the public of a source of enjoyment which does harm to nobody, inasmuch as the clever persons in question have an unlucky trick of caring little for what the worthy dull people aforesaid may happen to think or say.

Whatever motive might have induced her ladyship to write this letter, the effect was such as the reader has seen. Her dutiful son Arthur returned slowly and reluctantly homeward; loitering wherever he could find an excuse for loitering, astounding his active courier and alert valet by the dilatoriness of his movements, meditating all the way on the odiousness of blue-stocking women, (for from Lady Lindore's account of *la future*, he expected an epitome of all the arts and sciences—a walking and talking encyclopedia,) and feeling his taste for beauty grow stronger and stronger every step he took, until he finally surrendered his heart to the first pair of bright eyes and blooming cheeks which he had encountered since the receipt of his mother's letter—the pretty incognita of the Belford race-course.

Finding on inquiry that the carriage belonged to a gentleman of some consequence in the neighbourhood—that the ladies seated in it were his wife and daughters, and that there was little doubt of their attending the ball in the evening, he proceeded to the assembly-room, made himself known, as we have seen, to our friend Mr. Clavering, one of the stewards of the Races, and requested of him the honour of an introduction to Miss Elphinstone.

When led up in due form to the fair lady, he immediately discovered that she was not the divinity of the laudau: but as he ascertained, both from Mr. Clavering and the waiter at the inn, that there was another sister, a certain Miss Julia, whom his two authorities agreed in calling the finer woman; and as he learned from his partner herself that Miss Julia had been that morning on the race-ground,—that she was slightly indisposed, but would probably be sufficiently recovered on the morrow to attend both the course and the play—he determined to remain another night at Belford for the chance of one more glimpse of his fair one, and paid Miss Elphinstone sufficient attention to conceal his disappointment and command a future introduction to her sister, although he had too much self-control, and, to do him justice, too much respect for Lady Lindore's injunctions, to avail himself of the invitation of the lady of the mansion to partake of a late breakfast, or an early dinner—call it how he chose,—the next day at Ashley. He saw at a glance that she was a manœuvring mamma, (how very, very soon young gentlemen learn to make that discovery!) and, his charmer being absent, was upon his guard. "On the course," thought he, "I shall again see the beauty, and then——why then I shall be guided by circumstances:"—that being the most approved and circumspect way of signifying to oneself that one intends following one's own devices, whatever they may happen to be.

The morrow, however, proved so wet that the course was entirely deserted. Not a single carriage was present, except Miss Blackall's chariot and Stephen Lane's one-horse chaise. But in the evening, at the theatre, Lord Lindore had again the pleasure of seeing his fair enchantress, and of seeing her without her bonnet, and dressed to the greatest possible advantage in a very simply-made gown of clear muslin, without any other ornament than a nosegay of geranium and blossomed myrtle.

If he had thought her pretty under the straight brim of her cottage bonnet, he thought her still prettier now that her fair open forehead was only shaded by the rich curls of her chestnut hair. It was a round, youthful face,

with a bright, clear complexion; a hazel eye, with a spark in it like the Scotch agate in the British Museum; very red lips, very white teeth, and an expression about the corners of the mouth that was quite bewitching. She sat in the front row of the box between her stately sister and another young lady; her mother and two other ladies sitting behind her, and completely barring all access.

Lord Lindore hardly regretted this circumstance, so completely was he absorbed in watching his charmer, whose every look and action evinced the most perfect unconsciousness of being an object of observation to him or to any one. Her attention was given entirely, exclusively to the stage; she being perhaps the one single person in the crowded house who thought of the play, and the play only. The piece was one of Mr. Coleman's laughing and crying comedies — John Bull — and she laughed at Dennis Brulgruddery and cried at Job Thornberry with a heartiness and sensibility, a complete abandonment to the sentiment and the situation, that irresistibly suggested the idea of its being the first play she had ever seen. It was acted pretty much as such pieces (unless in the case of some rare exception) are acted in a country theatre; but hers was no critical pleasure: yielding entirely to the impression of the drama, the finest performance could not have gratified her more. To her, as to an artless but intelligent child, the scene was for a moment a reality. The illusion was perfect, and the sympathy evinced by her tears and her laughter was as unrestrained as it was ardent. Her mother and sister, who had the bad taste to be ashamed of this enviable freshness of feeling, tried to check her. But the attempt was vain. Absorbed in the scene, she hardly heard them; and even when the curtain dropped, she seemed so engrossed by her recollections as scarcely to attend to her mother's impatient summons to leave the house.

"Charming creature!" thought Lord Lindore to himself, as he sat 'taking his ease in his inn,' after his return from the theatre; "Charming creature!—how delightful is this artlessness, this ignorance, this bewitching youthfulness of heart and of person! How incomparably superior is this lovely girl, full of natural feeling, of intelligence and sensibility, to an over-educated heiress, with the whole code of criticism at her finger's end—too practised to be astonished, and too wise to be pleased! A young lady of high attainments! Twenty languages, I warrant me, and not an idea! Ugly too!"—thought poor Lord Lindore. And then the beauty of the Belford theatre passed before his eyes, and he made up his mind to stay another day and ascertain at least if the voice was as captivating as the countenance.

Again was poor Arthur doomed to disappointment. The day was, if possible, more wet and dreary than the preceding; and on going into the ball-room and walking straight to Mrs. Elphinstone, imagine to yourself, gentle reader, his dismay at finding in Miss Julia an exact fac-simile of her elder sister,—another tall, stylish, fashionable-looking damsel, not very old, but of a certainty not what a lordling of one-and-twenty is accustomed to call young. Poor dear Arthur! if Lady Lindore could but have seen how blank he looked, she would have thought him almost enough punished for his disobedient meditations of the night before. His lordship was however a thoroughly well-bred man, and after a moment of consternation recovered his politeness and his self-possession.

"Was there not another young lady besides Miss Elphinstone and yourself in the carriage on Tuesday, and at the play last night?" inquired Lord Lindore in a pause of the dance.

"I was not at the play," responded Miss Julia,—"but I suppose you mean Katy, poor dear Katy!"

"And who may Katy be?" demanded his lordship.

"Oh, poor little Katy!—she's a sister of mine, a younger sister."

"Very young, I presume?—not come out yet?—not introduced?"

"Yes!—no!" said Miss Julia, rather puzzled. "I don't know—I can't tell. The fact is, my lord, that Katy does not live with us. She was a sickly child, and sent for change of air to a distant relation of my mother's—a very good sort of person indeed, very respectable and very well off, but who made a strange *mésalliance*. I believe her husband is a gentleman farmer, or a miller, or a maltster, or something of that sort, so that they cannot be noticed by the family; but as they were very kind to Katy, and wished to keep her, having no children of their own, and the place agreed with her, she has stayed on with them. Mamma often talks of having her home. But she is very fond of them, and seems happy there, and has been so neglected, poor thing! that perhaps it is best that she should stay. And they are never contented without her. They sent for her home this morning. I don't wonder that they love her," added Miss Julia, "for she's a sweet natural creature, so merry and saucy, and artless and kind. Everybody is glad when she comes, and sorry when she goes."

This was praise after Lord Lindore's own heart, and he tried to prolong the conversation.

"Would she have come to the ball to-night if she had stayed?"

"Oh no! She would not come on Tuesday. She never was at a dance in her life. But she wanted exceedingly to go to another play, and I dare say that papa would have taken her. She was enchanted with the play."

"*That* I saw. She showed great sensibility. Her education has been neglected, you say?"

"She has had no education at all, except from the old rector of the parish,—a college tutor or some such oddity; and she is quite ignorant of all the things that other people know, but very quick and intelligent; so that"——

"Miss Julia Elphinstone," said Mr. Clavering, coming up to Lord Lindore and his partner, and interrupting a colloquy in which our friend Arthur was taking much interest,—"Miss Julia Elphinstone, Lady Selby has sprained her ancle, and is obliged to sit down; so that I must call upon you to name this dance. Come, young ladies!—to your places! What dance do you call, Miss Julia?"

And in balancing between the merits of "The Dusty Miller" and "Money Musk" (for this true story occurred in the merry day of country dances), and then in mastering the pleasant difficulties of going down an intricate figure remarking on the mistakes of the other couples, the subject dropped so effectually that it was past the gentleman's skill to recall.

Nor could he extort a word on the topic from his next partner, Miss Elphinstone, who, somewhat cleverer than her sister—colder, prouder, and more guarded, took especial pains to conceal what she esteemed a blot on the family escutcheon from one whose rank would, she thought, make him still more disdainful than herself of any connexion with the yeomanry, or, as she called them, the farmer and miller people of the country. He could not even learn the place of his fair one's residence, or the name of the relations with whom she lived, and returned to his inn in a most unhappy frame of mind, dissatisfied with himself and with all about him.

A sleepless night had, however, the not uncommon effect of producing a wise and proper resolution. He determined to proceed immediately to Glenham, and open his mind to his fond mother,—the friend, after all, most interested in his happiness, and most likely to enter into his feelings, however opposed they might be to her own views. "She has a right to my confidence, kind and indulgent as she has always been—I will lay my whole heart before her," thought Arthur. He had even magnanimity enough to determine, if she insisted upon the measure, that he would take a look at the heiress. "Seeing is not marrying," thought Lord Lindore; "and if she be really as ugly and as pedantic as I anticipate, I shall have a very good excuse for getting off—to say nothing of the chance of her disliking me. I'll see her at all events,—that can do no harm; and then—why then—*alors comme alors!* as my friend the baron says. At all events, I'll see her."

In meditations such as these passed the brief and rapid journey between Belford and Glenham. The morning was brilliantly beautiful, the distance little more than thirty miles, and it was still early in the day when the noble oaks of his ancestral demesne rose before him in the splendid foliage of autumn.

The little village of Glenham was one of those oases of verdure and cultivation which are sometimes to be met with in the brown desert of the Berkshire Downs. It formed a pretty picture to look down upon from the top of one of the turfy hills by which it was surrounded: the cottages and cottage gardens; the church rising amongst lime-trees and yews; the parsonage close by; the winding road; the great farm-house, with its suburb of ricks and barns, and stables and farm-buildings, surrounded by richly-timbered meadows, extensive coppices, and large tracts of arable land; and the abbey, with its beautiful park, its lake, and its woods, stretching far into the distance,—formed an epitome of civilized life in all its degrees—an island of fertility and comfort in the midst of desolation. Lord Lindore felt, as he gazed, that to be the owner of Glenham was almost worth the sacrifice of a young man's fancy.

Still more strongly did this feeling press upon him, mixed with all the tenderest associations of boyhood, as, in passing between the low Gothic lodges, the richly-wrought iron gate was thrown open to admit him by the well-remembered portress, a favourite pensioner of his mother's, her head slightly shaking with palsy, her neatly-attired person bent with age, and her hand trembling partly from infirmity but more for joy at the sight of her young master; and as he drove through the noble park, with its majestic avenues, its clear waters and magnificent woods, to the venerable mansion which still retained, in its antique portal, its deep bay windows, its turrets, towers and pinacles, its cloisters and its terraces, so many vestiges of the incongruous but picturesque architecture of the age of the Tudors: and by the time that he was ushered by the delighted old butler into the presence of Lady Lindore—a dignified and still handsome woman, full of grace and intellect, who, seated in the stately old library, looked like the very spirit of the place,—he was so entirely absorbed in the early recollections and domestic affections—had so completely forgotten his affairs of the heart, the beauty with whom he was so reasonably in love, and the heiress whom with equal wisdom he hated, that, when his mother mentioned the subject, it came upon him with a startling painfulness like the awaking from a pleasant dream.

He had, however, sufficient resolution to tell her the truth, and the whole truth, although the almost smiling surprise with which she heard the story was not a little mortifying to his vanity. A young man of one-and-twenty cares little for a lecture; but to suppose himself an object of ridicule to a person of admitted talent is insupportable. Such was unfortunately poor Arthur's case at the present moment.

"So much for arriving at what the law calls years of discretion," observed Lady Lindore, quietly resuming her embroidery. "From the time you wrote yourself sixteen, until this very hour, that silly heart of yours has been tossed like a shuttlecock from one pretty girl to another; and now you celebrate your coming of age by the sage avowal of loving a lady whom you have never spoken to, and hating another whom you have never seen—Well! I suppose you must have your own way. But, without questioning the charms and graces of this Katy of yours, just be pleased to tell me why you have taken such an aversion to my poor little girl. Is it merely because she has the hundred thousand pounds necessary to clear off your mortgages?"

"Certainly not."

"Or because I unluckily spoke of her talents?"

"Not of her talents, dear mother: no son of yours could dislike clever women. But you spoke of her as awfully accomplished—"

"I have never said a word of her accomplishments."

"As awfully learned, then——"

"Neither do I remember speaking of that."

"At all events, as awfully wise. And, dearest mother, your wise ladies and literary ladies are, not to say anything affronting, too wise for me. I like something artless, simple, natural—a wild, gay, playful creature, full of youthful health and life, with all her girlish tastes about her; fond of birds and flowers—"

"And charmed with a country play," added Lady Lindore, completing her son's sentence. "Well! we must find out this Katy of yours, if indeed the fancy holds. In the mean while, I have letters to write to your guardians; and you can revisit your old haunts in the grounds till dinner time, when you will see this formidable heiress, and will, I trust, treat her at least with the politeness of a gentleman and the attention due from the master of the house to an unoffending guest."

"She is here then?" inquired Lord Lindore.

"She was in this room in search of a book not half an hour before your arrival."

"Some grave essay or learned treatise, doubtless!" thought Arthur within himself; and then assuring his mother of his attention to her commands, he followed her suggestion and strolled out into the park.

The sun was yet high in the heavens, and the beautiful scene around him, clothed in the deep verdure of September, seemed rejoicing in his beams,—the lake, especially, lay sparkling in the sunshine like a sheet of molten silver; and almost unconsciously Lord Lindore directed his steps to a wild glen near the water, which had been the favourite haunt of his boyhood.

It was a hollow dell, surrounded by steep banks, parted from the lake by a thicket of fern and holly and old thorn, much frequented by the deer, and containing in its bosom its own deep silent pool, dark and bright as a diamond, with a grotto scooped out of one side of the hill, which in his childish days had been decayed and deserted, and of which he had taken possession for his fishing-tackle and other boyish property. Lady Lindore had, however, during his absence, taken a fancy to the place; had extended the stone-work, and covered it with climbing plants; had made walks and flowerbeds round the pool, indenting the pond itself with banks, bays, and headlands; had erected one or two rustic seats;—and it formed now, under the name of The Rockery, a very pretty lady's garden—all the prettier that the improvements had been managed with great taste—that the scene retained much of its original wildness, its irregularity of form and variety of shadow—and that even even in the creepers which trailed about the huge masses of stone, indigenous plants were skilfully mingled with the more gorgeous exotics. On this lovely autumn day it looked like a piece of fairy-land, and Lord Lindore stood gazing at the scene from under the ivied arch which led to its recesses with much such a feeling of delight and astonishment as must have been caused to Aladdin the morning after the slaves of the lamp had erected his palace of jewels and gold.

There are no jewels after all, like the living gems called flowers; and never were flowers so bright, so gorgeous, so beautiful, as in the Glenham Rockery. Convolvuluses of all colours, passion-flowers of all shades, clematises of twenty kinds, rich nasturtiums, sweet musk-roses, pearly-blossomed myrtles, starry jessamines, and a hundred splendid exotics, formed a glowing tapestry round the walls,—whose tops were crowned by velvet snapdragons, and large bushes of the beautiful cistus, called the rock-rose; whilst beds of geraniums, of lobelias, of calceolaria, and of every sort of gay annual, went dotting round the pool, and large plants of the blue hydrangea grew low upon the banks, and the long coral blossoms of the fuschia hung like weeping-willows into the water. Bees were busy in the honeyed tubes of the different coloured sultans, and dappled butterflies were swinging in the rich flowers of the China-aster; gold and silver fishes were playing in the pond, and the songster of early autumn, the ever-cheerful redbreast, was twittering from the tree. But bees, and birds, and butterflies were not the only tenants of the Glenham Rockery.

A group well suited to the scene, and so deeply occupied as to be wholly unconscious of observation, was collected near the entrance of the grotto. Adam Griffith, the well-remembered old gardener, with his venerable white locks, was standing, receiving and depositing in a covered basket certain prettily-folded little packets delivered to him by a young lady, who, half sitting, half kneeling, was

writing with a pencil the names of the flower-seeds (for such it seemed they were) on each nicely-arranged parcel. A fawn with a silver collar, and a very large Newfoundland dog, were amicably lying at her side. The figure was light, and round, and graceful; the air of the head (for her straw bonnet was also performing the office of a basket) was exquisitely fine, and the little white hand that was writing under old Adam's dictation might have served as a model for a sculptor. If these indications had not been sufficient to convince him that the incognita was not his nightmare the heiress, the first words she uttered would have done so.

"What name did you say, Adam?"

"Eschscholtzia Californica!"

"Oh dear me! I shall never write that without a blunder. How I do wish they would call flowers by pretty simple short names now-a-days, as they used to do! How much prettier words lilies and roses are than Es—— What did you say, Adam?"

"Eschscholtzia, Miss; 'tis a strange heathenish name, to be sure—Eschscholtzia Californica," replied Adam.

"Esch—scholt—zia! Is that right, Adam? Look."

And Adam assumed his spectacles, examined and assented.

"Eschscholtzia Cali——" And the fair seed-gatherer was proceeding gravely with her task, when the little fawn, whose quick sense of hearing was alarmed at some slight motion of Arthur's, bounded suddenly up, jerked the basket out of old Adam's hand, which fell (luckily tightly closed) into the water, and was immediately followed by the Newfoundland dog, who with no greater damage than alarming a whole shoal of gold and silver fish, who wondered what monster was coming upon them, and wetting his own shaggy coat, rescued the basket and bore it triumphantly to his mistress.

"Fie, Leila! Good Nelson!" exclaimed their fair mistress, turning round to caress her dog—"Lord Lindore!"

"Katy!—Miss Elphinstone!"

And enchanted to see her, and bewildered at finding her there, (for Katy it really was—the very Katy of the Belford Race-ground,) Lord Lindore joined the party, shook hands with old Adam, patted Nelson, made friends with Leila, and finally found himself *tête-à-tête* with his fair mistress; she sitting on one of the great low stones of the Rockery; he reclining at her side, just like that most graceful of all lovers Hamlet the Dane at the feet of Ophelia,—but with feelings differing as completely from those of that most sweet and melancholy prince, as happiness from misery. Never had Lord Lindore been so happy before!—never, (and it is saying much, considering the temperament of the young gentleman) never half so much in love!

It would not be fair, even if it were possible, to follow the course of a conversation that lasted two hours, which seemed to them as two minutes.

They talked of a thousand things: first of flower-seeds,—and she introduced him to the beautiful winged seed of the geranium, with the curious elastic corkscrew curl at the bottom of its silvery plume; and to that miniature shuttlecock which gives its name to one species of larkspur; and to the minute shining sandlike seed of the small lilac campanula, and the bright jet-like bullets of the fraxinella, and the tiny lilac balls of the white petuana; and to the heavy nutmeg-like seeds of the marvel of Peru: and they both joined in loving flowers and in hating hard names.

And then he tried to find out how she came there: and she told him that she lived close by: that the dear and kind relation with whom she resided was married to Mr. John Hale, his old tenant——

"John Hale!" interrupted Lord Lindore—"Old John Hale, the great farmer, great mealman, great maltster, the richest yeoman in Berkshire!—the most respectable of his respectable class! John Hale, who has accumulated his ample fortune with every man's good word, and has lived eighty years in the world without losing a friend or making an enemy!—I have thought too little of these things; but I have always been proud of being the landlord of John Hale!"

"Oh, how glad I am to hear you say so!" cried Katy. "He and his dear wife—his mistress, as he calls her—are so good to everybody and so kind to me! How glad I am to hear you say that!"

The tears glistened in her beautiful eyes; and Lord Lindore, after a little more praise of his venerable tenant, began talking of her own family, of the races, and of the play. And Katy laughed at her admiration of the acting, and acknowledged her delight with the most genuine *naïveté*.

"I did like it," said Katy: "and I should like to go to the play every night; and I don't wish to become too wise to be pleased, like mamma and Gertrude. But I should like to see Shakspeare acted best," added she, pointing to a book at her side, which Lord Lindore had not observed before. He took it up, and it opened of itself at "Much ado about Nothing;" and they naturally fell into talk upon the subject of the great poet of England,—a subject which is almost as inexhaustible as nature itself.

"I should think," said Katy, "that an actress of real talent would rather play Beatrice than any other part. Lady Lindore says that it is too saucy—but I think not; provided always that the sauciness be very sweetly spoken. That, however, is not what I love best in Beatrice: it is her uncalculating friendship for Hero, her devotion to her injured

cousin, her generous indignation at the base suspicion of Claudio. I don't know what the critics may say of the matter; but in my mind the fervid ardency of Beatrice, her violent — and the more violent because powerless — anger, forms the most natural female portrait in all Shakspeare. Imogen, Juliet, Desdemona, are all charming in their several ways, but none of them come up to that scolding."

"You think scolding, then, natural to a woman?"

"To be sure, when provoked. What else can she do? You would not have her fight, would you? And yet Beatrice had as good a mind for a battle as any woman that ever lived. Hark! There's the dressing-bell. You and I must fight out this battle another time," said she, with something of the sweet sauciness she had described. "Good b'ye till dinner-time, my lord.—Leila! Nelson!"

And followed by her pets, Katy ran off by an entrance to the Rockery which he had not seen before. Arthur was about to trace the windings of the labyrinth and follow the swift-footed beauty, when his mother's voice arrested him. She was standing under the ivied arch by which he had entered.

"Well, Arthur, how do you like the little heiress?"

"Mother!"

"Ay, the little heiress, — the learned, the ugly, and the wise! Your Katy! my Katy!"

"And are they really one? And had you the heart to frighten me in this cruel way for nothing?"

"Nay, Arthur, not for nothing! If I had called Katy as pretty as I thought her, there was great danger that the very commendation might have provoked you into setting up some opposite standard of beauty. I having selected a Hebe, you would have chosen a Juno. For, after all, your falling in love with her dear self at Belford Races, which I could not foresee, was as much the result of the spirit of contradiction as of anything else. Heaven grant that, now you know she has a hundred thousand pounds, you may not for that reason think fit to change your mind! For the rest, you now, I suppose, understand that good old John Hale (whose riches are not at all suspected by those foolish persons, Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone) proposed the match to me on finding at once your embarrassments and my fondness for his young relation, who, since the marriage of my own children, has been as a daughter in my house; and who is the kindest and dearest little girl that ever trod this work-a-day world."

"And learned?" inquired Lord Lindore, laughing.

"That you must inquire into yourself," replied his mother. "But if it should turn out that Doctor Wilmot, our good rector, finding her a child of seven years old, with very quick parts and very little instruction, took her education in hand, and has enabled her at twenty to gratify her propensity for the drama, by understanding Schiller and Calderon as well as you do, and Eschylus and Sophocles much better, why then you will have to consider how far your philosophy and her beauty may enable you to support the calamity. For my part, I hold the opinion that knowledge untainted by pedantry or vanity seldom does harm to man or woman; and Katy's bright eyes may possibly convert you to the same faith. In the mean while, you have nothing to do but to make love; a language, in which, from long practice, I presume you to be sufficiently well versed to play the part of instructor."

"O mother! have some mercy!"

"And as the fair lady dines here, you may begin your lessons this very evening. So now, my dear Arthur, go and dress."

And with another deprecating "O mother!" the happy son kissed Lady Lindore's hand, and they parted.

THE ABSENT MEMBER.

Everybody remembers the excellent character of an absent man by La Bruyère, since so capitally dramatized by Isaac Bickerstaff; [why does not Mr. Liston revive the piece?— he would be irresistibly amusing in the part]; —everybody remembers the character, and everybody would have thought the whole account a most amusing and pleasant invention, had not the incredible facts been verified by the sayings and doings of a certain Parisian count, whose name has escaped me,* a well-known individual of that day, whose *distractions* (I use the word in the French sense, and not in the English) set all exaggeration at defiance, — who was, in a word, more *distrait* than *Le Distrait* of La Bruyère.

He, "that nameless he," still remains unrivalled; as an odd Frenchman, when such a thing turns up, which is seldom, will generally be found to excel at all points your English oddity, which is comparatively common. No single specimen so complete in its kind has appeared in our country; but the genus is

* In writing of the forgetfulness of others, a touch of that quality may be permitted in oneself. It is in keeping, and belongs to the subject. And in good truth, if one may say of this sort of *distractions* as of that worst species of hallucination called love, "*they* best can paint them who can feel them most," then am I a fit recorder of all the errors, blunders, and mistakes that proceed from want of memory; I being as much addicted to forget names, and dates, and places—to write one word for another—to confound authorities, and misquote verse, as Mr. Coningsby himself. I cannot even remember the style and title of my own geraniums, and only yesterday gave away our own Megalanthon seedling (as precious to a *geranium-breeder* as an Eclipse colt to a gentleman on the turf), mistaking it for a Lord Combermere. "The force of *absence* could no farther go."

by no means extinct; and every now and then, especially amongst learned men, great mathematicians, and eminent Grecians, one has the luck to light upon an original, whose powers of perception and memory are subject to lapses the most extraordinary,—fits of abstraction, during which everything that passes falls unobserved into some pit of forgetfulness, like the oubliette of an old castle, and is never seen or heard of again.

My excellent friend Mr. Coningsby is just such a man. The Waters of Oblivion of the Eastern Fairy Tale, or the more classical Lethe, are but types to shadow forth the extent and variety of his anti-recollective faculty. Let the fit be strong upon him, and he shall not recognize his own mansion or remember his own name. Suppose him at Whitehall, and the fire which burnt the two Houses would at such a time hardly disturb him. You might, at certain moments, commit murder in his presence with perfect impunity. He would not know the killer from the killed.

Of course this does not happen every day; or rather opportunities of so striking a character do not often fall in his way, or doubtless he would not fail to make the most of them. Of the smaller occasions, which can occur more frequently, he is pretty sure to take advantage; and, from the time of his putting on two different coloured stockings, when getting up in the morning, to that of his assuming his wife's laced night-cap on going to bed, his every-day's history is one perpetual series of blunders and mistakes.

He will salt his tea, for instance, at breakfast-time, and put sugar on his muffin, and swallow both messes without the slightest perception of his having deviated from the common mode of applying those relishing condiments. With respect to the quality of his food, indeed, he is as indifferent as Dominie Sampson; and he has been known to fill his glass with vinegar instead of sherry, and to pour a ladle of turtle-soup over his turbot instead of lobster-sauce; and doubtless would have taken both the eatables and drinkables very quietly, had not his old butler, on the watch against such occurrences, whisked both glass and plate away with the celerity of Sancho's physician, Don——Bless me! I have forgotten that name also! I said that this subject was contagious—Don——he who officiated in the island of Barataria—Don——No, Doctor Pedro Rezio de Aguero, that is the title to which the gentleman answers:—Well, the vinegar would have been drunken, and the turbot and turtle-sauce eaten, had not the vigilant butler played the part of Don Pedro Rezio, and whipped off the whole concern, whilst the good man, his master, sat in dubious meditation, wondering what had become of his dinner, and not quite certain that he might not have eaten it, until a plateful of more salubrious and less incongruous viands —ham and chicken, for instance, or roast beef and French beans — was placed before him, and settled the question. But for that inestimable butler, a coroner's inquest would have been held upon him long ago.

After breakfast he would dress, thrice happy if the care of his valet protected him from shaving with a pruning-knife, or putting on his waistcoat wrong side out; being dressed, he would prepare for his morning ride, mounting if his groom did not happen to be waiting, the very first four-footed animal that came in his way, sometimes the butcher's horse, with a tray nicely balanced before—sometimes the postboy's donkey, with the letter-bags swinging behind—sometimes his daughter's pony, side-saddle notwithstanding; and, when mounted, forth he sallies, rather in the direction which his steed may happen to prefer than in that which he himself had intended to follow.

Bold would be the pen that should attempt even a brief summary of the mistakes committed in one single morning's ride. If he proceed, as he frequently does, to our good town of Belford, he goes for wrong things, to the wrong shops; miscalls the people whom he accosts (seldom, indeed, shall he hit on the proper name, title, or vocation of any one whom he chances to address;) and asks an old bachelor after his wife, and an old maid after her children; and finally sums up a morning of blunders by going to the inn where he had not left his horse, and quietly stepping into some gig or phaeton prepared for another person. In a new neighbourhood this appropriation of other people's property might bring our hero into an awkward dilemma; but the man and his ways are well known in our parts; and, when the unlucky owner of the abstracted equipage arrives in a fury, and demands of the astounded ostler what has become of his carriage, one simple exclamation, "Mr. Coningsby, sir!" is at once felt by the aggrieved proprietor to be explanation enough.

Should morning-calls be the order of the day, he contrives to make a pretty comfortable confusion in that simple civility. First of all, he can hardly gallop along the king's highway without getting into a *démêlé* with the turnpike keepers; sometimes riding quietly through a gate without paying the slightest attention to their demand for toll; at others, tossing them, without dreaming of stopping to receive the change, a shilling or a sovereign, as the case may be: for, although great on the currency question—(have I not said that the gentleman is* a county member?)—he is

* Erratum: for *is* read *was*. "Was a county member" will do just as well, and save the eminent publisher and respectable printer of these loyal volumes from any danger of being called, innocent as they are, to the bar of the House, and committed to his Majesty's gaol of Newgate for breach of privilege—to say nothing of my own share of the peril. *Was* must be the word.

practically most happily ignorant of the current coin of the realm, and would hardly know gold from silver, if asked to distinguish between them. This event is a perfect God-send to the gate-keeper; who, confiding in the absolute deafness produced by his abstraction, calls after him with a complete assurance that he may be honest with impunity, and that, bawl as he may, there is no more chance of his arresting his passenger, than the turnpike-man of Ware had of stopping Johnny Gilpin. Accordingly, after undergoing the ceremony of offering change, he pockets the whole coin with a safe conscience. Beggars (and he is very charitable) find their account also in this ignorance: he flings about crowns for penny-pieces, and half-sovereigns for sixpences, relieving the same set a dozen times over, and getting quit of a pocketful of money — (for though he have a purse, he seldom remembers to make use of it—luckily seldom—for if he do fill that gentlemanly net-work, he is sure to lose it, cash, bank-notes, and all) — in the course of a morning's ride.

Arrived at the place of his destination, the house at which he is to call, a new scene of confusion is pretty sure to arise. In the first place, it rarely happens that he does arrive at the veritable mansion to which his visit is intended. He is far more likely to ride to the wrong place, inquire of the bewildered footman for some name not his master's, and be finally ushered into a room full of strangers, persons whom he neither visits nor knows, who stare and wonder what brought him, whilst he, not very sure whether he ought to remember them, whether they be his acquaintances or not, stammers out an apology and marches off again. (N. B. He once did this whilst canvassing for the county to a rival candidate, and finding only the lady of the house, entreated her, in the most insinuating manner, to exert her influence with her husband for his vote and interest. This passed for a deep stroke of finesse amongst those who did not know him—they who did, laughed and exclaimed, "Mr. Coningsby!") or he shall commit the reverse mistake, and riding to the right house, shall ask for the wrong people; or, finding the family out, he shall have forgotten his own name — I mean his name-tickets—and shall leave one from his wife's or daughter's card-case, taken up by that sort of accident which is to him second nature;— or he shall unite all these blunders, and leave at a house, where he himself does not visit, a card left at his own mansion by a third person, who is also unacquainted with the family to which so unconsciously that outward sign and token of acquaintanceship had travelled.

Imagine the mistakes and the confusions occasioned by such doings in a changeable neighbourhood, much broken into parties by politics and election contests! Sometimes it does good, — as between two old country squires, who, having been friends all their lives, had quarrelled about the speed of a greyhound and the decision of a course, and had mutually vowed never to approach each other's door. The sight of his antagonist's card (left in one of Mr. Coningsby's absent fits) so mollified the more testy elder of the two, that he forthwith returned the visit, and the opposite party being luckily not at home, a card was left there also; and either individual thinking the concession first made to himself, was emulous in stepping forward with the most cordial hand-shaking when they met casually at dinner at a third place.

But Mr. Coningsby's visiting blunders were not always so fortunate; where they healed one breach, they made twenty, and one had very nearly occasioned a duel betwixt two youngsters, lords of neighbouring manors, between whose gamekeepers there was an outstanding feud. The card left was taken for a cartel—a note of defiance; and but for the interference of constables and mayors, and magistrates, and aunts, and sisters, and mammas, and peace-preservers of all ages and sexes, some very hot blood would inevitably have been spilt. As it was, the affair terminated in a grand effusion of ink; the correspondence between the seconds, a delicious specimen of polite and punctilious quarrelling, having been published for the edification of the world, and filling three columns of the county newspapers. It came to no conclusion; for although the one party conceded that a card had been left, and the other that the person to whom the name belonged did not leave it, yet how the thing *did* arrive on the hall-table remained a mystery. The servant who opened the door happened to be a stranger, and somehow or other nobody ever thought of Mr. Coningsby;—nay, he himself, although taking a great interest in the dispute, and wondering over the puzzle like the rest of the neighbourhood, never once recollected his own goings on that eventful morning, nor dreamt that it could be through his infirmity that Sir James Mordaunt's card was left at Mr. Chandler's;—to so incredible a point was his forgetfulness carried.

If in so simple a matter as morning visiting he contrived to produce such confusion, think how his genius must have expanded when so dangerous a weapon as a pen got into his hands! I question if he ever wrote a letter in his life without some blunder in the date, the address, the signature, or the subject. He would indite an epistle to one person, direct it to another, and send it to a third, who could not conceive from whom it came, because he had forgotten to put his name at the bottom. But of the numerous perplexities to which he was in the habit of giving rise, franks were by very far the most frequent cause. Ticklish things are they even to the punctual and the careful; and to Mr.

Coningsby the giving one quite perfectly right seemed an impossibility. There was the date to consider, the month, the day of the month, the year—I have known him write the wrong century;—then came the name, the place, the street, and number, if in London—if in the country, the town and county;—then, lastly, his own name, which, for so simple an operation as it seems, he would contrive generally to omit, and sometimes to boggle with, now writing only his patronymic as if he were a peer, now only his Christian name as if a prince, and now an involution of initials that defied even the accurate eye of the Clerks of the Post Office. Very, very few can have been the franks of his that escaped paying.

Of course his friends and acquaintance were forewarned, and escaped the scrape (for it is one) of making their correspondents pay triple postage. Bountiful as he was in his offers of service in this way, (and keeping no account of the numbers, he would just as readily give fifty as one) none incurred the penalty save strangers and the unwary. I, for my own part, never received but one letter directed by him in my life, and in the address of that, the name—my name, the name of the person to whom the letter was written—was wanting. "Three Mile Cross," held the place usually occupied by "Miss Mitford."

"Three Mile Cross–
Reading,
Berks,"

ran the direction. But as I happened to receive about twenty times as many letters, and especially franked letters, as all the good people of the "Cross" put together, the packet was sent first to me, by way of experiment; and, as I recognized the seal of a dear friend and old correspondent, I felt no scruple in appropriating for once, like a Scottish laird, the style and title of the place where I reside. And I and the postmaster were right; the epistle was, as it happened, intended for me.

Notes would, in his hands, have been still more dangerous than letters; but from this peril he was generally saved by the caution of the two friends most anxious for his credit,—his wife and the old butler, who commonly contrived, the one to write the answers to all invitations or general billets that arrived in the house, the other to watch that none from him should pass without due scrutiny. Once, however, he escaped their surveillance; and the consequence was an adventure which, though very trifling, proved, in the first instance, so uncomfortable as to cause both his keepers to exert double vigilance for the future. Thus the story ran:—

A respectable, but not wealthy, clergyman had been appointed to a living about ten miles off—had married, and brought home his bride; and Mr. Coningsby, who, as county member, called upon everybody within a still wider circuit, paid a visit in due form, accompanied by, or rather accompanying, his lady; which call having been duly returned (neither party being at home), was followed at the proper interval by an invitation for Mr. and Mrs. Ellis to dine at Coningsby House. The invitation was accepted; but, when the day arrived, the dangerous illness of a near relation prevented the young couple from keeping their engagement; and some time after, the fair bride began to think it necessary to return the civilities of her neighbours, by giving her first dinner-party. Notes of invitation were despatched accordingly to four families of consequence, amongst them Mr. Coningsby's; but it was the busy Christmas-time, when, between family parties, and London visiters, and children's balls, everybody's evenings were bespoken for weeks beforehand; and from three of her friends, accordingly, she received answers declining her invitation, and pleading pre-engagements. From the Coningsbys, only, no note arrived. But accidentally Mr. Ellis heard that they were to go at Christmas on a distant visit, and, taking for granted that the invitation had not reached the worthy member or his amiable lady, Mrs. Ellis, instead of attempting to collect other friends, made up her mind to postpone her party to a more convenient season.

The day on which the dinner was to have been given proved so unfavourable that our young couple saw good cause to congratulate themselves on their resolution. The little hamlet of East Longford, amongst the prettiest of our North-of-Hampshire villages, so beautiful in the summer, from the irregularities of the ground, the deep woody lanes hollowed like water-courses, the wild commons which must be passed to reach it, and the profound seclusion of the one straggling street of cottages and cottage-like houses, with the vicarage, placed like a bird's-nest on the side of a steep hill, clothed to the very top with beech-woods; this pretty hamlet, so charming in its summer verdure, its deep retirement, and its touch of wildness in the midst of civilization, was, from those circumstances, no tempting spot in midwinter; vast tracts across the commons were then nearly impassable; the lanes were sloughs; and the village itself, rendered insulated and inaccessible by the badness of the roads, conveyed no other feeling than that of dreariness and loneliness. Mr. and Mrs. Ellis, who, although not insensible of the inconveniences of their abode, had made up their minds to bear the evil and enjoy the good of their situation, could not help congratulating themselves as they sat in their snug dining-parlour, after a five o'clock dinner, on the postponement of their party. "The snow is above a foot deep, and the bridge broken, so that neither servants nor horses could have got to the Eight Bells; and where could we have housed them?" said the gentle-

man. "And the drawing-room smokes so, in this heavy atmosphere, that we cannot light a fire there," responded the lady. "Never, to be sure, was anything so fortunate!"

And just as the word was spoken, a carriage and four drove up to the door, and exactly at half-past six (the hour named in the invitation) Mr. and Mrs. Coningsby were ushered into the room.

Imagine the feelings of four persons who had never met before in such a situation—especially of the two ladies. Mrs. Ellis, dinner over, with the consciousness of the half bottle of port and the quarter of sherry, the apples, the nuts, the single pair of mould candles, her drawing-room fire that could not be lighted, her dinner to provide as well as to cook, and her own dark merino and black silk apron! Poor Mrs. Coningsby, on the other hand, seeing at a glance how the case stood, feeling for the trouble that they were giving, and sinking under a consciousness far worse to bear than Mrs. Ellis's—the consciousness of being overdressed,—how heartily did she wish herself at home again! or, if that were too much to desire, what would she have given to have replaced her claret-coloured satin gown, her hat with its white plumes, her pearls and her rubies, back again in their wardrobes and cases.

It was a trial of no ordinary nature to the good sense, good breeding, and good humour of both parties; and each stood it well. There happened to be a cold round of beef in the house, some undressed game, and plenty of milk and eggs; the next farmer had killed a pig; and with pork chops, cold beef, a pheasant, and apple fritters, all very nicely prepared, more fastidious persons than Mr. and Mrs. Coningsby might have made a good dinner. The host brought out his best claret; the pretty hostess regained her smiles, and forget her black apron and her dark merino; and, what was a far more difficult achievement, the fair visiter forgot her plumes and her satin. The evening, which began so inauspiciously, ended pleasantly and sociably; and, when the note (taken, as was guessed, by our hero from the letter-boy, with the intention of sending it by a groom) was found quietly ensconced in his waistcoat pocket, Mrs. Coningsby could hardly regret the termination of her present adventure, although fully resolved never again to incur a similar danger.

Of his mishaps when attending his duty in parliament, and left in some measure to his own guidance, (for, having no house in town, his family only go for about three months in the season,) there is no end. Some are serious, and some very much the reverse. Take a specimen of his London scrapes.

Our excellent friend wears a wig, made to imitate a natural head of hair, which it is to be presumed that at the best of times it does not very closely resemble, and which after a week of Mr. Coningsby's wearing put on with the characteristic negligence of his habits sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other,—always awry, and frequently hindside before,—assumes such a demeanour as never was equalled by Christian peruke at any time or in any country.

One day last winter, being in London without a servant, he by some extraordinary chance happened to look in the glass when he was dressing, and became aware of the evil state of his caxon;—a piece of information for which he had been generally indebted to one of his two guardians, Mrs. Coningsby or the old butler;—and, recollecting that he was engaged to a great dinner-party the ensuing evening, stepped into the first hairdresser's shop that he passed to bespeak himself a wig; where being a man of exceedingly pleasant and jocular manners, (your oddities, with the exception of the peculiar oddity, are commonly agreeable persons,) he passed himself off for a bachelor to the artificer of hair, and declared that his reason for desiring a wig of peculiar beauty and becomingness was that he was engaged to a great party the next day, at which he expected to meet the lady of his heart, and that his fate and fortune depended on the set of his curls. This he impressed very strongly on the mind of the perruquier, who, an enthusiast in his art, as a great artist should be, saw nothing extraordinary in the fact of a man's happiness hanging on the cut of his wig, and gravely promised that no exertion should be wanting on his part to contribute to the felicity of his customer, and that the article in question, as perfect as hands could make it, should be at his lodgings the next evening at seven.

Punctual to the hour arrived the maker of perukes; and, finding Mr. Coningsby not yet returned to dress, went to attend another appointment, promising to come back in half an hour. In half an hour accordingly the man of curls reappeared—just in time to see a cabriolet driving rapidly from the door, at which a maid-servant stood tittering.

"Where is Mr. Coningsby?" inquired the perruquier.

"Just gone out to dinner," replied the girl; "and a queer figure he is, sure enough. He looks, for all the world, like an owl in an ivy-bush?"

"To be sure, he has not got his new wig on—my wig!" returned the alarmed artist. "He never can be such a fool as that!"

"He's fool enough for anything in the way of forgetting or not attending, although a main clever man in other respects," responded our friend Sally; "and he has got a mop of hair on his head, whoever made it, that would have served for half a dozen wigs."

"The article was sent home untrimmed, just as it was woven," replied the unfortunate fabricator, in increasing consternation; "and a capital article it is. I came by his own direction to cut and curl it, according to the shape

of his face; the gentleman being particular about the set of it, because he's going a-courting."

"Going a-courting?" exclaimed Sally, amazed in her turn; "the Lord ha' mercy upon the poor wretch! If he has not clean forgot that he's married, and is going to commit big—big—bigotry, or bigoly—I don't know what you call it—to have two wives at once! and then he'll be hanged. Going a-courting! What'll Madam say! He'll come to be hanged, sure enough!'

"Married already!" quoth the perruquier, with a knowing whistle, and a countenance that spoke "Benedick, the married man," in every feature. "Whew! One wife at a time's enough for most people. But he'll not be hanged. The fact of his wearing my wig with the hair six inches long will save him. He must be *non compos*. And you that stand tittering there can be little better to let him go out in such a plight. Why did'nt you stop him?"

"Stop him!" ejaculated the damsel,—"stop Mr. Coningsby! I should like to know how!"

"Why, by telling him what he was about to be sure, and getting him to look in the glass. Nobody with eyes in his head could have gone out such a figure!"

"Talk to him!" quoth Sally; "but how was I to get him to listen? And, as to looking in the glass, I question if ever he did such a thing in his life. You don't know our Mr. Coningsby, that's clear enough!"

"I only wish he had never come in my way, that I never had had the ill luck to have known him!" rejoined the discomfited artist. "If he should happen to mention my name as his wigmaker whilst he has that peruke on his head, I am ruined!—my reputation is gone for ever!"

"No fear of that!" replied Sally, in a comforting tone, struck with compassion at the genuine alarm of the unlucky man of wigs. "There's not the slightest danger of his mentioning your name, because you may be certain sure that he does not remember it. Lord love you! he very often forgets his own. Don't you be frightened about that!" repeated the damsel soothingly, as she shut the door, whilst the discomfited perruquier returned to his shop, and Mr. Coningsby, never guessing how entirely in outward semblance he resembled the wild man of the woods, proceeded to his dinner-party, where his coiffure was, as the hairdresser had predicted, the theme of universal astonishment and admiration.*

This, however, was one of the least of his scrapes. He has gone to court without a sword; has worn coloured clothes to a funeral, and black to a wedding. There is scarcely any conventional law of society which, in some way or other, he hath not contrived to break; and, in two or three slight instances, he has approached more nearly than beseems a magistrate and a senator to a *dêmêlé* with the laws of the land. He hath quietly knocked down a great fellow, for instance, whom he caught beating a little one, and hath once or twice been so blind, or so absent, as to suffer a petty culprit to run away, when brought up for examination, in virtue of his own warrant. But it is remarkable that he never, in his most oblivious moods, is betrayed into an unkind word or an ungenerous action. There is a moral instinct about him which preserves him, in the midst of his oddities, pure and unsullied in thought and deed. With all his "*distractions*," he never lost a friend or made an enemy; his opponents at an election are posed when they have to get up a handbill against him; and for that great test of amiableness, the love of his family, his household, his relations, servants, and neighbours, I would match my worthy friend, George Coningsby, against any man in the county.

* Strange things are wigs on—it's a wonder that any man who has the good luck to be bald should condescend to wear one—and still stranger are they off, particularly when a large number are gathered together. The first grand collection that ever I happened to see was, a great many years ago, at Mr. Basil Montagu's, where Dr. Parr, who made a London home of that most agreeable house, did me the honour to introduce me to a long row of his own most orthodox-looking caxons, (everybody remembers the epithet borrowed from his peculiar peruke, "Parr's *buzz* prose," in the poetry of the Antijacobin),—a long row hung upon wine-bottles, each of which was dignified by some high-sounding title. One, I remember, he called the Grand Seignior, and another the Emperor of Morocco,—full-bottoms all of them, fit cushions for the three-cornered clerical hat. The last assortment that was brought under my notice consisted of some twenty or thirty lank-haired and puritanical-looking periwigs, arranged in due order on a long table in the Victoria Theatre, and destined to adorn the pates of the roundheads in my tragedy of Charles the first. Grave as the occasion was,—and nothing can be more serious than the first night of a new play to manager and author,—neither Mr. Abbott nor I could help laughing at the profound solemnity of their appearance. The only person who did not laugh was the hairdresser. He had a respect for his art.

END OF BELFORD REGIS.

COUNTRY STORIES.

COUNTRY LODGINGS.

Between two and three years ago, the following pithy advertisement appeared in several of the London papers:—

"Country Lodgings.—Apartments to let in a large farm-house, situate in a cheap and pleasant village, about forty miles from London. Apply (if by letter post-paid) to A. B., No. 7, Salisbury-street, Strand."

Little did I think, whilst admiring in the broad page of the Morning Chronicle the compendious brevity of this announcement, that the pleasant village referred to was our own dear Aberleigh; and that the first tenant of those apartments should be a lady whose family I had long known, and in whose fortunes and destiny I took a more than common interest!

Upton Court was a manor-house of considerable extent, which had in former times been the residence of a distinguished Catholic family, but which, in the changes of property incident to our fluctuating neighbourhood, was now "fallen from its high estate," and degraded into the homestead of a farm so small, that the tenant, a yeoman of the poorest class, was fain to eke out his rent by entering into an agreement with a speculating Belford upholsterer, and letting off a part of the fine old mansion in the shape of furnished lodgings.

Nothing could be finer than the situation of Upton, placed on the summit of a steep acclivity, looking over a rich and fertile valley to a range of woody hills; nothing more beautiful than the approach from Belford, the road leading across a common between a double row of noble oaks, the ground on one side sinking with the abruptness of a north-country burn, whilst a clear spring, bursting from the hill side, made its way to the bottom between patches of shaggy underwood and a grove of smaller trees; a vine-covered cottage just peeping between the foliage, and the picturesque outline of the Court, with its old-fashioned porch, its long windows, and its tall, clustered chimneys towering in the distance. It was the prettiest prospect in all Aberleigh.

The house itself retained strong marks of former stateliness, especially in one projecting wing, too remote from the yard to be devoted to the domestic purposes of the farmer's family. The fine proportions of the lofty and spacious apartments, the rich mouldings of the ceilings, the carved chimney-pieces, and the panelled walls, all attested the former grandeur of the mansion; whilst the fragments of stained glass in the windows of the great gallery, the half-effaced coats of arms over the door-way, the faded family portraits, grim black-visaged knights, and pale shadowy ladies, or the reliques of mouldering tapestry that fluttered against the walls, and, above all, the secret chamber constructed for the priest's hiding-place in days of Protestant persecution, for in darker ages neither of the dominant churches was free from that foul stain,—each of these vestiges of the manners and the history of times long gone by appealed to the imagination, and conspired to give a Mrs. Radcliffe-like, Castle-of-Udolpho-sort of romance to the manor-house. Really, when the wind swept through the overgrown espaliers of that neglected but luxuriant wilderness, the terraced garden; when the screech-owl shrieked from the ivy which clustered up one side of the walls, and "rats and mice, and such small deer," were playing their pranks behind the wainscot, it would have formed as pretty a locality for a supernatural adventure, as ever decayed hunting lodge in the recesses of the Hartz, or ruined fortress on the castled Rhine. Nothing was wanting but the ghost, and a ghost of any taste would have been proud of such a habitation.

Less like a ghost than the inhabitant who did arrive, no human being well could be.

Mrs. Cameron was a young widow. Her father, a Scotch officer, well-born, sickly, and poor, had been but too happy to bestow the hand of his only child upon an old friend and fellow-countryman, the principal clerk in a government office, whose respectable station, easy fortune, excellent sense, and super-excellent character, were, as he thought, and as fathers, right or wrong, are apt to think, advantages more than sufficient to counterbalance a disparity of years and appearance, which some daughters might have thought startling,—the bride being a beautiful girl of seventeen, the bridegroom a plain man of seven-and-fifty. In this case, at least, the father was right. He lived long enough to see that the young wife was unusually attached to her kind and indulgent husband, and died, about a twelve-month after the marriage, with the fullest confidence in her respectability and happiness. Mr. Cameron did not long survive him. Before she was nineteen the fair Helen Came-

ron was a widow and an orphan, with one beautiful boy, to whom she was left sole personal guardian, an income being secured to her ample for her rank in life, but clogged with the one condition of her not marrying again.

Such was the tenant, who, wearied of her dull suburban home, a red brick house in the middle of a row of red brick houses; tired of the loneliness which never presses so much upon the spirits as when left solitary in the environs of a great city; pining for country liberty, for green trees, and fresh air; much caught by the picturesqueness of Upton, and its mixture of old-fashioned stateliness and village rusticity; and, perhaps, a little swayed by a desire to be near an old friend and correspondent of the mother, to whose memory she was so strongly attached, came in the budding spring time, the showery, flowery month of April, to spend the ensuing summer at the Court.

We, on our part, regarded her arrival with no common interest. To me it seemed but yesterday since I had received an epistle of thanks for a present of one of dear Mary Howitt's charming children's books, — an epistle undoubtedly not indited by the writer, —in huge round text, between double pencil lines, with certain small errors of orthography corrected in a smaller hand above; followed in due time by postscripts to her mother's letters, upon one single line, and the spelling much amended; then by a short, very short note, in French; and at last, by a despatch of unquestionable authenticity, all about doves and rabbits, — a holiday scrawl, rambling, scrambling, and uneven, and free from restraint as heart could desire. It appeared but yesterday since Helen Graham was herself a child; and here she was, within two miles of us, a widow and a mother!

Our correspondence had been broken off by the death of Mrs. Graham when she was about ten years old, and although I had twice called upon her in my casual visits to town during the lifetime of Mr. Cameron; and although these visits had been most punctually returned, it had happened, as those things do happen in dear, provoking London, where one is sure to miss the people one wishes most to see, that neither party had ever been at home; so that we had never met, and I was at full liberty to indulge in my foolish propensity of sketching in my mind's eye a fancy portrait of my unknown friend.

Il Penseroso is not more different from L'Allegro than was my anticipation from the charming reality. Remembering well her mother's delicate and fragile grace of figure and countenance, and coupling with that recollection her own unprotected and solitary state, and somewhat melancholy story, I had pictured to myself (as if contrast were not in this world of ours much more frequent than congruity) a mild, pensive, interesting, fair-haired beauty, tall, pale, and slender: — I found a Hebe, and Euphrosyne, — a round, rosy, joyous creature, the very impersonation of youth, health, sweetness, and gaiety, laughter flashing from her hazel eyes, smiles dimpling round her coral lips, and the rich curls of her chestnut hair,—for having been fourteen months a widow, she had, of course, laid aside the peculiar dress,—the glossy ringlets of her "bonny brown hair" literally bursting from the comb that attempted to confine them.

We soon found that her mind was as charming as her person. Indeed, her face, lovely as it was, derived the best part of its loveliness from her sunny temper, her frank and ardent spirit, her affectionate and generous heart. It was the ever-varying expression, an expression which could not deceive, that lent such matchless charms to her glowing and animated countenance, and to the round and musical voice sweet as the spoken voice of Malibran, or the still fuller and more exquisite tones of Mrs. Jordan, which, true to the feeling of the moment, vibrated alike to the wildest gaiety and the deepest pathos. In a word, the chief beauty of Helen Cameron was her sensibility. It was the perfume to the rose.

Her little boy, born just before his father's death, and upon whom she doted, was a magnificent piece of still life. Calm, placid, dignified, an infant Hercules for strength and fair proportions, grave as a judge, quiet as a flower, he was, in point of age, exactly at that most delightful period when children are very pleasant to look upon, and require no other sort of notice whatsoever. Of course this state of perfection could not be expected to continue. The young gentleman would soon aspire to the accomplishments of walking and talking—and then!—but as that hour of turmoil and commotion to which his mamma looked forward with ecstasy was yet at some months' distance, I contented myself with saying of master Archy, with considerably less than the usual falsehood, that which everybody does say of only children, that he was the finest baby that ever was seen.

We met almost every day. Mrs. Cameron was never weary of driving about our beautiful lanes in her little pony-carriage, and usually called upon us in her way home, we being not merely her oldest, but almost her only friends; for lively and social as was her temper, there was a little touch of shyness about her, which induced her rather to shun than to court the company of strangers. And indeed the cheerfulness of temper, and activity of mind, which made her so charming an acquisition to a small circle, rendered her independent of general society. Busy as a bee, sportive as a butterfly, she passed the greater part of her time in the open air, and, having caught from me that very contagious and en-

grossing passion, a love of floriculture, had actually undertaken the operation of restoring the old garden at the Court — a coppice of brambles, thistles, and weeds of every description, mixed with flowering-shrubs, and overgrown fruit-trees—to something like its original order. The farmer, to be sure, had abandoned the job in despair, contenting himself with growing his cabbages and potatoes in a field hard by. But she was certain that she and her maid Martha, and the boy Bill, who looked after her pony, would weed the paths, and fill the flower-borders in no time. We should see; I had need take good care of my reputation, for she meant her garden to beat mine.

What progress Helen and her forces, a shatterbrain boy who did not know a violet from a nettle, and a London-bred girl who had hardly seen a rose-bush in her life, would have made in clearing this forest of underwood, might easily be foretold. Accident, however, that frequent favourer of bold projects, came to her aid in the shape of a more efficient coadjutor.

Late one evening the fair Helen arrived at our cottage with a face of unwonted gravity. Mrs. Davies (her landlady) had used her very ill. She had taken the west wing, in total ignorance of their being other apartments to let at the Court, or she would have secured them. And now a new lodger had arrived, had actually taken possession of two rooms in the centre of the house; and Martha, who had seen him, said he was a young man, and a handsome man—and she herself a young woman unprotected and alone!—It was awkward, very awkward! Was it not very awkward? What was she to do?

Nothing could be done that night; so far was clear; but we praised her prudence, promised to call at Upton the next day, and, if necessary, to speak to this new lodger, who might, after all, be no very formidable person; and quite relieved by the vent which she had given to her scruples, she departed in her usual good spirits.

Early the next morning she re-appeared. "She would not have the new lodger disturbed for the world! He was a Pole. One, doubtless, of those unfortunate exiles. He had told Mrs. Davies that he was a Polish gentleman desirous chiefly of good air, cheapness, and retirement. Beyond a doubt he was one of those unhappy fugitives. He looked grave, and pale, and thoughtful, quite like a hero of romance. Besides, he was the very person who a week before had caught hold of the reins, when that little restive pony had taken fright at the baker's cart, and nearly backed Bill and herself into the great gravel-pit on Lanton Common. Bill had entirely lost all command over the pony, and but for the stranger's presence of mind, she did not know what would have become of them. Surely I must remember her telling me the circumstance! Besides, he was unfortunate! He was poor! He was an exile! She would not be the means of driving him from the asylum which he had chosen, for all the world! — No! not for all my geraniums!" an expression which is by no means the anti-climax that it seems — for in the eyes of a florist, and that florist an enthusiast and a woman, what is this rusty fusty dusty musty bit of earth, called the world, compared to a stand of bright flowers?

And finding upon inquiry, that M. Choynowski (so he called himself) had brought a letter of recommendation from a respectable London tradesman, and that there was every appearance of his being, as our fair young friend had conjectured, a foreigner in distress, my father not only agreed that it would be a cruel attempt to drive him from his new home, (a piece of tyranny which, even in this land of freedom, might, I suspect, have been managed in the form of an offer of double rent, by that grand despot, money,) but resolved to offer the few attentions in our poor power, to one whom every look and word proclaimed him to be, in the largest sense of the word, a gentleman.

My father had seen him, not on his visit of inquiry, but a few days after, bill-hook in hand, hacking away manfully at the briars and brambles of the garden. My first view of him was in a position still less romantic, assisting a Belford tradesman to put up a stove in the nursery.

One of Mrs. Cameron's few causes of complaint in her country lodgings had been the tendency to smoke in that important apartment. We all know that when those two subtle essences, smoke and wind, once come to do battle in a wide, open chimney, the invisible agent is pretty sure to have the best of the day, and to drive his vapoury enemy at full speed before him. M. Choynowski, who by this time had established a gardening acquaintance, not merely with Bill and Martha, but with their fair mistress, happening to see her, one windy evening, in a paroxysm of smoky distress, not merely recommended a stove, after the fashion of the northern nations' notions, but immediately walked into Belford to give his own orders to a respectable ironmonger; and they were in the very act of erecting this admirable accessary to warmth and comfort (really these words are synonymous) when I happened to call.

I could hardly have seen him under circumstances better calculated to display his intelligence, his delicacy, or his good-breeding. The patience, gentleness, and kind feeling, with which he contrived at once to excuse and to remedy certain blunders made by the workmen in the execution of his orders, and the clearness with which, in perfectly correct and idiomatic English, slightly tinged with a

foreign accent, he explained the mechanical and scientific reasons for the construction he had suggested, gave evidence at once of no common talent, and of a considerateness and good-nature in its exercise more valuable than all the talent in the world. If trifling and every-day occurrences afford, as I believe they do, the surest and safest indications of character, we could have no hesitation in pronouncing upon the amiable qualities of M. Choynowski.

In person he was tall and graceful, and very noble-looking. His head was particularly intellectual, and there was a calm sweetness about the mouth that was singularly prepossessing. Helen had likened him to a hero of romance. In my mind he bore much more plainly the stamp of a man of fashion — of that very highest fashion which is too refined for finery, too full of self-respect for affectation. Simple, natural, mild, and gracious, the gentle reserve of his manner added, under the circumstances, to the interest which he inspired. Somewhat of that reserve continued even after our acquaintance had ripened into intimacy. He never spoke of his own past history, or future prospects, shunned all political discourse, and was with difficulty drawn into conversation upon the scenery and manners of the North of Europe. He seemed afraid of the subject.

Upon general topics, whether of literature or art, he was remarkably open and candid. He possessed in an eminent degree the talent of acquiring languages for which his countrymen are distinguished, and had made the best use of those keys of knowledge. I have never met with any person whose mind was more richly cultivated, or who was more calculated to adorn the highest station. And here he was wasting life in a secluded village in a foreign country! What would become of him after his present apparently slender resources should be exhausted, was painful to imagine. The more painful, that the accidental discovery of the direction of a letter had disclosed his former rank. It was part of an envelope addressed, "A Monsieur Monsieur le Comte Choynowski," and left as a mark in a book all except the name being torn off. But the fact needed no confirmation. All his habits and ways of thinking bore marks of high station. What would become of him?

It was but too evident that another calamity was impending over the unfortunate exile. Although studiously discreet in word, and guarded in manner, every action bespoke his devotion to his lovely fellow inmate. Her wishes were his law. His attentions to her little boy were such as young men rarely show to infants, except for love of the mother; and the garden, that garden abandoned since the memory of man, (for the Court, previous to the arrival of the present tenant, had been for years uninhabited,) was, under his exertions and superintendence, rapidly assuming an aspect of luxuriance and order. It was not impossible but Helen might realize her playful vaunt, and beat me in my own art after all.

John (our gardener lad) was as near being jealous as possible, and, considering the estimation in which John is known to hold our doings in the flower way, such jealousy must be accepted as the most flattering testimony to his rival's success. To go beyond our garden was, in John's opinion, to be great indeed!

Every thought of the Count Choynowski was engrossed by the fair Helen; and we saw with some anxiety that she in her turn was but too sensible of his attentions, and that every thing belonging to his country assumed in her eyes an absorbing importance. She sent to London for all the books that could be obtained respecting Poland; ordered all the journals that interested themselves in that interesting though apparently hopeless cause; turned liberal,—she who had been reared in the lap of conservatism, and whom my father used laughingly to call the little Tory;—turned Radical, turned Republican,—for she far out-soared the moderate doctrines of whiggism in her political flights; denounced the Emperor Nicholas as a tyrant; spoke of the Russians as a nation of savages; and in spite of the evident uneasiness with which the Polish exile listened to any allusion to the wrongs of his country, for he never mingled in such discussions, omitted no opportunity of proving her sympathy by declaiming with an animation and vehemence, as becoming as anything so like scolding well could be, against the cruelty and wickedness of the oppressors of that most unfortunate of nations.

It was clear that the peace of both was endangered, perhaps gone; and that it had become the painful duty of friendship to awaken them from their too bewitching dream.

We had made an excursion, on one sunny summer's day, as far as the Everley Hills. Helen, always impassioned, had been wrought into a passionate recollection of her own native country, by the sight of the heather just bursting into its purple bloom; and M. Choynowski, usually so self-possessed, had been betrayed into the expression of a kindred feeling by the delicious odour of the fir plantations, which served to transport him in imagination to the balm-breathing forests of the North. This sympathy was a new, and a strong bond of union between two spirits but too congenial; and I determined no longer to defer informing the gentleman, in whose honour I placed the most implicit reliance, of the peculiar position of our fair friend.

Detaining him, therefore, to coffee, (we had taken an early dinner in the fir grove,) and suffering Helen to go home to her little boy,

I contrived, by leading the conversation to capricious wills, to communicate to him, as if accidentally, the fact of her forfeiting her whole income in the event of a second marriage.—He listened with grave attention.

"Is she also deprived," inquired he, "of the guardianship of her child?"

"No. But as the sum allowed for the maintenance is also to cease from the day of her nuptials, and the money to accumulate until he is of age, she would, by marrying a poor man, do irreparable injury to her son, by cramping his education. It is a grievous restraint."

He made no answer. And after two or three attempts at conversation, which his mind was too completely preoccupied to sustain, he bade us good-night, and returned to the Court.

The next morning we heard that he had left Upton and gone, they said, to Oxford. And I could not help hoping that he had seen his danger and would not return until the peril was past.

I was mistaken. In two or three days he returned, exhibiting less self-command than I had been led to anticipate. The fair lady, too, I took occasion to remind of this terrible will, in hopes, since he would not go, that she would have the wisdom to take her departure. No such thing; neither party would move a jot. I might as well have bestowed my counsel upon the two stone figures on the great gateway. And heartily sorry, and a little angry, I resolved to let matters take their own course.

Several weeks passed on, when one morning she came to me in the sweetest confusion, the loveliest mixture of bashfulness and joy.

"He loves me!" she said; "he has told me that he loves me!"

"Well?"

"And I have referred him to you. That clause——"

"He already knows it." And then I told her, word for word, what had passed.

"He knows of that clause, and he still wishes to marry me! He loves me for myself! Loves me, knowing me to be a beggar! It is true, pure, disinterested affection!"

"Beyond all doubt, it is. And if you could live upon true love——"

"Oh, but where *that* exists, and youth, and health, and strength, and education, may we not be well content to try to earn a living *together?* Think of the happiness comprised in that word! I could give lessons;—I am sure that I could. I would teach music, and drawing, and dancing—anything for him! or we could keep a school here at Upton—anywhere with him!

"And I am to tell him this?"

"Not the words!" replied she, blushing like a rose at her own earnestness; "not those words!"

Of course, it was not very long before M. le Comte made his appearance.

"God bless her, noble, generous creature!" cried he, when I had fulfilled my commission. "God for ever bless her!"

"And you intend, then, to take her at her word, and set up school together?" exclaimed I, a little provoked at his unscrupulous acceptance of her proffered sacrifice. "You really intend to keep a lady's boarding-school here at the Court?"

"I intend to take her at her word, most certainly," replied he very composedly; "but I should like to know, my good friend, what has put it into her head, and into yours, that if Helen marries me she must needs earn her own living? Suppose I should tell you," continued he, smiling, "that my father, one of the richest of the Polish nobility, was a favourite friend of the Emperor Alexander; that the Emperor Nicholas continued to me the kindness which his brother had shown to my father, and that I thought, as he had done, (gratitude and personal attachment apart,) that I could better serve my country, and more effectually ameliorate the condition of my tenants and vassals, by submitting to the Russian government, than by a hopeless struggle for national independence? Suppose that I were to confess, that chancing in the course of a three-years' travel to walk through this pretty village of yours, I saw Helen, and could not rest until I had seen more of her;—supposing all this, would you pardon the deception, or rather the allowing you to deceive yourselves? Oh, if you could but imagine how delightful it is to a man, upon whom the humbling conviction has been forced, that his society is courted and his alliance sought for the accidents of rank and fortune, to feel that he is, for once in his life, honestly liked, fervently loved for himself, such as he is, his own very self,—if you could but fancy how proud he is of such friendship, how happy in such love, you would pardon him, I am sure you would; you would never have the heart to be angry. And now that the Imperial consent to a foreign union—the gracious consent for which I so anxiously waited to authorize my proposals—has at length arrived, do you think," added the Count, with some seriousness, "that there is any chance of reconciling this dear Helen to my august master? or will she still continue a rebel?"

At this question, so gravely put, I laughed outright. "Why really, my dear Count, I cannot pretend to answer decidedly for the turn that the affair might take; but my impression—to speak in that idiomatic English, more racy than elegant, which you pique yourself upon understanding—my full impression is, that Helen having for no reason upon earth but her interest in you, *ratted* from Conservatism to Radicalism, will for the same cause lose no time in ratting back again. A woman's politics, especially if she be a young woman, are generally the result of feeling

rather than of opinion, and our fair friend strikes me as a most unlikely subject to form an exception to the rule. However, if you doubt my authority in this matter, you have nothing to do but to inquire at the fountain-head. There she sits, in the arbour. Go and ask."

And before the words were well spoken, the lover, radiant with happiness, was at the side of his beloved.

THE LONDON VISITER.

Being in a state of utter mystification, (a very disagreeable state, by-the-bye,) I hold it advisable to lay my unhappy case, in strict confidence, in the lowest possible whisper, and quite in a corner, before my kind friend, patron, and protector, the public, through whose means—for now-a-days every body knows everything, and there is no riddle so dark but shall find an Œdipus to solve it—I may possibly be able to discover whether the bewilderment under which I have been labouring for the last three days be the result of natural causes, like the delusions recorded in Dr. Brewster's book, or whether there be in this little south of England county of ours, year 1836, a revival of the old science of Gramarye, the glamour art, which, according to that veracious minstrel, Sir Walter Scott, was exercised with such singular success in the sixteenth century by the Ladye of Branksome upon the good knight, William of Deloraine, and others his peers. In short, I want to know——But the best way to make my readers understand my story, will be to begin at the beginning.

I am a wretched visiter. There is not a person in all Berkshire who has so often occasion to appeal to the indulgence of her acquaintance to pardon her sins of omission upon this score. I cannot tell how it happens; nobody likes society better when in it, or is more delighted to see her friends; but it is almost as easy to pull a tree of my age and size up by the roots, as it is to dislodge me in summer from my flowery garden, or in the winter from my sunny parlour, for the purpose of accepting a dinner invitation, or making a morning call. Perhaps the great accumulation of my debts in this way, the very despair of ever paying them all, may be one reason (as is often the case, I believe, in pecuniary obligations) why I so seldom pay any; then, whether I do much or not, I have generally plenty to do; then again, I so dearly love to do nothing; then, summer or winter, the weather is commonly too cold for an open carriage, and I am eminently a catch-cold person; so that between wind and rain, business and idleness, no lady in the county with so many places that she ought to go to, goes to so few: and yet it was from the extraordinary event of my happening to leave home three days following, that my present mystification took its rise. Thus the case stands.

Last Thursday morning, being the 23d day of this present month of June, I received a note from my kind friend and neighbour, Mrs. Dunbar, requesting very earnestly that my father and myself would dine that evening at the Hall, apologising for the short notice, as arising out of the unexpected arrival of a guest from London, and the equally unexpected absence of the General, which threw her (she was pleased to say) upon our kindness to assist in entertaining her visiter. At seven o'clock, accordingly, we repaired to General Dunbar's, and found our hostess surrounded by her fine boys and girls, conversing with a gentleman, whom she immediately introduced to us as Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Thompson was a gentleman of about ——Pshaw! nothing is so unpolite as to go guessing how many years a man may have lived in this most excellent world, especially when it is perfectly clear, from his dress and demeanour, that the register of his birth is the last document relating to himself which he would care to see produced.

Mr. Thompson, then, was a gentleman of no particular age; not quite so young as he had been, but still in very tolerable preservation, being pretty exactly that which is understood by the phrase an old beau. He was of middle size and middle height, with a slight stoop in the shoulders; a skin of the true London complexion, between brown and yellow, and slightly wrinkled: eyes of no very distinct colour; a nose which, belonging to none of the recognized classes of that many-named feature, may fairly be called anonymous; and a mouth, whose habitual mechanical smile (a smile which, by the way, conveyed no impression either of gaiety or of sweetness) displayed a set of teeth which did great honour to his dentist. His whiskers and his wig were a capital match as to colour; and altogether it was a head calculated to convey a very favourable impression of the different artists employed in getting it up.

His dress was equally creditable to his tailor and his valet, "rather rich than gaudy," (as Miss Byron said of Sir Charles Grandison,) except in the grand article of the waistcoat, a brocade brodé of resplendent lustre, which combined both qualities. His shoes were bright with the new French blacking, and his jewelry, rings, studs, brooches, and chains (for he wore two, that belonging to his watch, and one from which depended a pair of spectacles, folded so as to resemble an eye-glass,) were of the finest material and the latest fashion.

In short, our new acquaintance was an old beau. He was not, however, that which an

old beau so frequently is, an old bachelor. On the contrary, he spoke of Mrs. Thompson and her parties, and her box at the opera (he did not say on what tier) with some unction, and mentioned with considerable pride a certain Mr. Browne, who had lately married his eldest daughter; Browne, be it observed, with an *e*, as his name (I beg his pardon for having misspelt it) was Thomson without the *p*; there being I know not what of dignity in the absence of the consonant, and the presence of the vowel, though mute. We soon found that both he and Mr. Browne lent these illustrious names to half a score of clubs, from the Athenæum downward. We also gathered from his conversation that he resided somewhere in Gloucester Place or Devonshire Place, in Wimpole Street or Harley Street, (I could not quite make out in which of those respectable double rows of houses his domicile was situate,) and that he contemplated with considerable jealousy the manner in which the tide of fashion had set in to the south-west, rolling its changeful current round the splendid mansions of Belgrave Square, and threatening to leave this once distinguished quartier as bare and open to the jesters of the silver-fork school as the ignoble precincts of Bloomsbury. It was a strange mixture of feeling. He was evidently upon the point of becoming ashamed of a neighbourhood of which he had once been not a little proud. He spoke slightingly of the Regent's Park, and eschewed as much as possible all mention of the Diorama and the Zoological, and yet seemed pleased and flattered, and to take it as a sort of personal compliment, when Mrs. Dunbar professed her fidelity to the scene of her youthful gaiety, Cavendish Square and its environs.

He had been, it seemed, an old friend of the General's, and had come down partly to see him, and partly for the purpose of a day's fishing, although, by some mistake in the wording of his letter, his host, who did not expect him until the next week, happened to be absent. This, however, had troubled him little. He saw the General often enough in town. Angling was his first object in the country; and as the fine piece of water in the park (famous for its enormous pike) remained *in statu quo*, and Edward Dunbar was ready to accompany and assist him, he had talked the night before of nothing but his flies and his rods, and boasted, in speaking of Ireland, the classic land of modern fishermen, of what he meant to do, and what he had done—of salmon caught in the wilds of Connemara, and trout drawn out amid the beauties of Killarney. Fishing exploits, past and future, formed the only theme of his conversation during his first evening at the Hall. On that which we spent in his company, nothing could be farther from his inclination than any allusion, however remote, to his beloved sport. He had been out in the morning, and we at last extorted from Edward Dunbar, upon a promise not to hint at the story until the hero of the adventure should be fairly off, that, after trying with exemplary patience all parts of the mere for several hours without so much as a nibble, a huge pike, as Mr. Thompson asserted, or, as Edward suspected, the root of a tree, had caught fast hold of the hook. If pike it were, the fish had the best of the battle, for, in a mighty jerk on one side or the other (the famous Dublin tackle maintaining its reputation, and holding as firm as the cordage of a man-of-war,) the unlucky angler had been fairly pulled into the water, and soused over head and ears. How his valet contrived to reinstate his coiffure, unless, indeed, he travelled with a change of wigs, is one of those mysteries of an old beau's toilet which pass female comprehension.

Of course there was no further mention of angling. Our new acquaintance had quite subjects enough without touching upon that. In eating, for instance, he might fairly be called learned. Mrs. Dunbar's cuisine was excellent, and he not only praised the different dishes in a most scientific and edifying manner, but volunteered a recipe for certain little mutton pies, the fashion of the season. In drinking he was equally at home. Edward had produced his father's choicest hermitage and lachryma, and he seemed to me to know literally by heart all the most celebrated vintages, and to have made pilgrimages to the most famous vineyards all over Europe. He talked to Helen Dunbar, a musical young lady, of Grisi and Malibran; to her sister Caroline, a literary enthusiast, of the poems of the year, "Ion," and "Paracelsus;" to me he spoke of geraniums; and to my father of politics—contriving to conciliate both parties, (for there were Whigs and Tories in the room,) by dubbing himself a liberal Conservative. In short, he played his part of Man of the World perfectly to his own satisfaction, and would have passed with the whole family for the very model of all London visiters, had he not unfortunately nodded over certain verses which he had flattered Miss Caroline into producing, and fallen fast asleep during her sister's cavatina; and if his conversation, however easy and smooth, had not been felt to be upon the whole rather vapid and prosy. "Just exactly," said young Edward Dunbar, who, in the migration transit between Eton, which he had left at Easter, and Oxford, which he was to enter at Michaelmas, was plentifully imbued with the aristocratic prejudices common to each of those venerable seats of learning "just exactly what in the fitness of things the talk of a Mr. Thompson ought to be."

The next afternoon I happened to be engaged to the Lady Margaret Gore, another pleasant neighbour, to drink tea; a convenient fashion, which saves time and trouble, and is much followed in these parts during the sum-

mer months. A little after eight I made my appearance in her saloon, which, contrary to her usual polite attention, I found empty. In the course of a few minutes she entered, and apologised for her momentary absence, as having been caused by a London gentleman on a visit at the house, who arriving the evening before, had spent all that morning at the side of Loddon fishing, (where, by the way, observed her ladyship, he had caught nothing,) and had kept them waiting dinner. "He is a very old friend of ours," added Lady Margaret; "Mr. Thompson, of Harley Street, whose daughter lately married Mr. Browne of Gloucester Place," and, with the word, entered Mr. Thompson in his own proper person.

Was it or was it not the Mr. Thompson of the day before? Yes! no!——No! yes! It would have been, only that it could not be. The alibi was too clearly proved: Lady Margaret had spent the preceding evening with *her* Mr. Thompson in one place, and I myself with *my* Mr. Thompson in another. Different they must be, but oh, how alike! I am too short-sighted to be cognizant of each separate feature. But there it was, the same common height and common size, and common physiognomy, wigged, whiskered, and perfumed to a hair! The self-same sober magnificence of dress, the same cut and colour of coat, the same waistcoat of brocade brodé—of a surety they must have employed one identical tailor, and one measure had served for both! Chains, studs, brooches, rings—even the eye-glass spectacles were there. Had he (this he) stolen them? Or did the Thompsons use them alternately, upon the principle of ride and tie?

In conversation the similarity was even more striking—safe, civil, prosy, dozy, and yet not without a certain small pretension. The Mr. Thompson of Friday talked as his predecessor of Thursday had done, of Malibran and Grisi, "Paracelsus" and "Ion," politics and geraniums. He alluded to a recipe (doubtless the famous recipe for mutton pies) which he had promised to write out for the benefit of the housekeeper, and would beyond all question have dozed over one young lady's verses, and fallen asleep to another's singing, if there had happened to be such narcotics as music and poetry in dear Lady Margaret's drawing-room. Mind and body, the two Mr. Thompsons were as alike as two peas, as two drops of water, as two Emperor-of-Morocco butterflies, as two death's-head moths. Could they have been twin brothers, like the Dromios of the old drama? or was the vicinity of the Regent's Park peopled with Cockney anglers—Thompsons whose daughters had married Brownes?

The resemblance haunted me all night. I dreamt of Browns and Thompsons, and to freshen my fancy and sweep away the shapes by which I was beset, I resolved to take a drive. Accordingly, I ordered my little phaeton, and, perplexed and silent, bent my way to call upon my fair friend, Miss Mortimer. Arriving at Queen's-bridge Cottage, I was met in the rose-covered porch by the fair Frances. "Come this way, if you please," said she, advancing towards the dining-room; "we are late at luncheon to-day. My friend, Mrs. Browne, and her father, Mr. Thompson, our old neighbours when we lived in Welbeck Street, have been here for this week past, and he is so fond of fishing that he will scarcely leave the river even to take his meals, although for aught I can hear he never gets so much as a bite."

As she ceased to speak, we entered; and another Mr. Thompson—another, yet the same, stood before me. It was not yet four o'clock in the day, therefore of course the dress-coat and the brocade waistcoat were wanting; but there was the man himself, Thompson the third, wigged, whiskered, and eye-glassed, just as Thompson the first might have tumbled into the water at General Dunbar's, or Thompson the second have stood waiting for a nibble at Lady Margaret's. There he sat evidently preparing to do the agreeable, to talk of music and of poetry, of Grisi and Malibran, of "Ion" and "Paracelsus," to profess himself a liberal Conservative, to give receipts for patés, and to fall asleep over albums. It was quite clear that he was about to make this display of his conversational abilities; but I could not stand it. Nervous and mystified as the poor Frenchman in the memorable story of "Monsieur Tonson," I instinctively followed his example, and fairly fled the field.

JESSE CLIFFE.

Living as we do in the midst of rivers, water in all its forms, except indeed that of the trackless and mighty ocean, is familiar to our little inland county. The slow majestic Thames, the swift and wandering Kennet, the clear and brimming Loddon, all lend life and verdure to our rich and fertile valleys. Of the great river of England—whose course from its earliest source, near Cirencester, to where it rolls calm, equable, and full, through the magnificent bridges of our splendid metropolis, giving and reflecting beauty,* presents so

*There is nothing finer in London than the view from Waterloo-bridge on a July evening, whether coloured by the gorgeous hues of the setting sun reflected on the water in tenfold glory, or illuminated by a thousand twinkling lights from lamps, and boats, and houses, mingling with the mild beams of the rising moon. The calm and glassy river, gay with unnumbered vessels; the magnificent buildings which line its shores; the combination of all that is loveliest in art or in nature, with all that is most animating in

grand an image of power in repose—it is not now my purpose to speak; nor am I about to expatiate on that still nearer and dearer stream, the pellucid Loddon,—although to be rowed by one dear and near friend up those transparent and meandering waters, from where they sweep at their extremest breadth under the lime-crowned terraces of the Old Park at Aberleigh, to the pastoral meadows of Sandford, through which the narrowed current wanders so brightly—now impeded by beds of white water-lilies, or feathery-blossomed bulrushes, or golden flags—now overhung by thickets of the rich wayfaring tree, with its wealth of glorious berries, redder and more transparent than rubies — now spanned from side to side by the fantastic branches of some aged oak;—although to be rowed along that clear stream, has long been amongst the choicest of my summer pleasures, so exquisite is the scenery, so perfect and so unbroken the solitude. Even the shy and foreign-looking kingfisher, most gorgeous of English birds, who, like the wild Indian retiring before the foot of man, has nearly deserted our populous and cultivated country, knows and loves the lovely valley of the Loddon.

It is not, however, of the Loddon that I am now to speak. The scene of my little story belongs to a spot quite as solitary, but far less beautiful, on the banks of the Kennett, which, a few miles before its junction with the Thames, passes through a tract of wild, marshy country—water-meadows at once drained and fertilised by artificial irrigation, and totally unmixed with arable land; so that the fields being for the most part too wet to admit the feeding of cattle, divided by deep ditches, undotted by timber, unchequered by cottages, and untraversed by roads, convey in their monotonous expanse (except perhaps at the gay season of haymaking) a feeling of dreariness and desolation, singularly contrasted with the picturesque and varied scenery, rich, glowing, sunny, bland, of the equally solitary Loddon meadows.

A large portion of these English prairies, comprising a farm called the Moors, was, at the time of which I write, in the occupation of a wealthy yeoman named John Cobham, who, the absentee tenant of an absentee landlord, resided upon a small property of his own about two miles distant, leaving the large deserted house, and dilapidated out-buildings, to sink into gradual decay. Barns half unthatched, tumble-down cart-houses, palings rotting to pieces, and pigsties in ruins, contributed, together with a grand collection of substantial and dingy ricks of fine old hay — that most valuable but most gloomy-looking species of agricultural property—to the general aspect of desolation by which the place was distinguished. One solitary old labourer, a dreary bachelor, inhabited, it is true, a corner of the old roomy house, calculated for the convenient accommodation of the patriarchal family of sons and daughters, men-servants and maid-servants, of which a farmer's household consisted in former days; and one open window, (the remainder were bricked up to avoid taxes,) occasionally a door ajar, and still more rarely a thin wreath of smoke ascending from one of the cold dismal-looking chimneys, gave token that the place was not wholly abandoned. But the uncultivated garden, the grass growing in the bricked court, the pond green with duckweed, and the absence of all living things, cows, horses, pigs, turkeys, geese, or chickens — and still more of those talking, as well as living things, women and children—all impressed on the beholder that strange sensation of melancholy which few can have failed to experience at the sight of an uninhabited human habitation. The one solitary inmate failed to relieve the pressing sense of solitude. Nothing but the ringing sound of female voices, the pleasant and familiar noise of domestic animals, could have done that; and nothing approaching to noise was ever heard in the Moors. It was a silence that might be felt.

The house itself was approached through a long, narrow lane, leading from a wild and watery common; a lane so deeply excavated between the adjoining hedge-rows, that in winter it was little better than a water-course; and beyond the barns and stables, where even that apology for a road terminated, lay the extensive tract of low, level, marshy ground from whence the farm derived its title; a series of flat, productive water-meadows, surrounded partly by thick coppices, partly by the winding Kennett, and divided by deep and broad ditches; a few pollard willows, so old that the trunk was, in some, riven asunder, whilst in others nothing but the mere shell remained, together with here and there a stunted thorn, alone relieving the monotony of the surface.

The only regular inhabitant of this dreary scene was, as I have before said, the old labourer, Daniel Thorpe, who slept in one corner of the house, partly to prevent its total dilapidation, and to preserve the valuable hay ricks and the tumble-down farm buildings from the pillage to which unprotected property is necessarily exposed, and partly to keep in repair the long line of boundary fence, to

motion and in life, produce a picture gratifying alike to the eye and the heart—and the more exhilarating, or rather perhaps more soothing, because, for London, so singularly peaceful and quiet. It is like some gorgeous town in fairyland, astir with busy and happy creatures, the hum of whose voices comes floating from the craft upon the river, or the quays by the water side. Life is there, and sound and motion; but blessedly free from the jostling of the streets, the rattling of the pavement, the crowd, the confusion, the tumult, and the din of the work-a-day world. There is nothing in the great city like the scene from Waterloo bridge at sunset. I see it in my mind's eye this instant.

clean the graffages, clear out the moat-like ditches, and see that the hollow-sounding wooden bridges, which formed the sole communication by which the hay wagons could pass to and from the distant meadows, were in proper order to sustain their ponderous annual load. Daniel Thorpe was the only accredited unfeathered biped who figured in the parish books as occupant of The Moors; nevertheless, that swampy district could boast of one other irregular and forbidden but most pertinacious inhabitant — and that inhabitant was our hero, Jesse Cliffe.

Jesse Cliffe was a lad of some fifteen or sixteen years of age — there or thereabout; for, with the exact date of his birth, although from circumstances most easily ascertained, even the assistant-overseer did not take the trouble to make himself acquainted. He was a parish child born in the workhouse, the offspring of a half-witted orphan girl and a sturdy vagrant, partly tinker, partly ballad-singer, who took good care to disappear before the strong arm of justice, in the shape of a tardy warrant and a halting constable, could contrive to intercept his flight. He joined, it was said, a tribe of gipsies, to whom he was suspected to have all along belonged; and who, vanishing at the same time, accompanied by half the linen and poultry of the neighbourhood, were never heard of in our parts again; whilst the poor girl whom he had seduced and abandoned, with sense enough to feel her misery, although hardly sufficient to be responsible for the sin, fretted, moaned, and pined—losing, she hardly knew how, the half-unconscious light-heartedness which had almost seemed a compensation for her deficiency of intellect, and with that light-heartedness losing also her bodily strength, her flesh, her colour, and her appetite, until about a twelvemonth after the birth of her boy, she fell into a decline and died.

Poor Jesse, born and reared in the workhouse, soon began to evince symptoms of the peculiarities of both his parents. Half-witted, like his mother, wild and roving as his father—it was found impossible to check his propensity to an out-of-door life.

From the moment, postponed as long as possible in such establishments, in which he doffed the petticoat—a moment, by the way, in which the obstinate and masterful spirit of the ungentle sex often begins to show itself in nurseries of a far more polished description;—from that moment may Jesse's wanderings be said to commence. Disobedience lurked in the habit masculine. The wilful urchin stood, like some dandy apprentice, contemplating his brown sturdy legs, as they stuck out from his new trowsers, already (such was the economy of the tailor employed on the occasion) "a world too *short*," and the first use he made of those useful supporters was to run away. So little did any one really care for the poor child, that not being missed till night-fall, or sought after till the next morning, he had strayed far enough, when at last picked up, and identified by the parish mark on his new jacket, to be half-frozen, (it was midwinter when his first elopement happened,) half-starved, half-drowned, and more than half-dead of fatigue and exhaustion. "It will be a lesson!" said the moralizing matron of the workhouse, as, after a sound scolding, she fed the little culprit and put him to bed. "It will be a lesson to the rover!" And so it proved; for, after being recruited by a few days' nursing, he again ran away, in a different direction.

When recovered the second time, he was whipped as well as fed—another lesson which only made the stubborn recusant run the faster. Then, upon his next return, they shut him up in a dark den appropriately called the black-hole, a restraint which, of course, increased his zest for light and liberty, and in the first moment of freedom—a moment greatly accelerated by his own strenuous efforts in the shape of squalling, bawling, roaring, and stamping, unparalleled and insupportable, even in that mansion of din—in the very instant of freedom he was off again; he ran away from work; he ran away from school; certain to be immersed in his dismal dungeon as soon as he could be recaught; so that his whole childhood became a series of alternate imprisonments and escapes.

That he should be so often lost was, considering his propensities and the proverbial cunning of his caste, not, perhaps, very remarkable. But the number of times and the variety of ways, in which, in spite of the little trouble taken in searching for him, he was sent back to the place from whence he came, was really something wonderful. If any creature in the world had cared a straw for the poor child, he must have been lost over and over: nobody did care for him, and he was sure to turn up as a bad guinea. He has been cried like *Found* Goods in Belford Market; advertised like a strayed donkey in the *H——shire Courant;* put for safe keeping into compters, cages, roundhouses, and bridewells; passed, by different constables, through half the parishes in the county; and so frequently and minutely described in handbills and the *Hue and Cry*, that by the time he was twelve years old, his stature, features, and complexion were as well known to the rural police as those of some great state criminal. In a word, "the lad *would* live;" and the Aberleigh overseers, who would doubtless have been far from inconsolable if they had never happened to hear of him again, were reluctantly obliged to make the best of their bargain.

Accordingly, they placed him as a sort of boy of all-work, at "the shop" at Hinton, where he remained, upon an accurate

computation, somewhere about seven hours; they then put him with a butcher at Langley, where he staid about five hours and a half, arriving at dusk, and escaping before midnight: then with a baker at Belford, in which good town he sojourned the (for him) unusual space of two nights and a day; and then they apprenticed him to Master Samuel Goddard, an eminent dealer in cattle, leaving his new master to punish him according to law, provided he should run away again. Run away of course he did; but as he had contrived to earn for himself a comfortably bad character for stupidity and laziness, and as he timed his evasion well—during the interval between the sale of a bargain of Devonshire stots, and the purchase of a lot of Scotch kyloes, when his services were little needed—and as Master Samuel Goddard had too much to do and to think of, to waste his time and his trouble on a search after a heavy-looking under-drover, with a considerable reputation for laziness, Jesse, for the first time in his life, escaped his ordinary penalties of pursuit and discovery—the parish officers contenting themselves by notifying to Master Samuel Goddard, that they considered their responsibility, legal as well as moral, completely transferred to him in virtue of their indentures, and that whatever might be the future destiny of his unlucky apprentice, whether frozen or famished, hanged or drowned, the blame would rest with the cattle-dealer aforesaid, to whom they resolved to refer all claims on their protection, whether advanced by Jesse himself or by others.

Small intention had Jesse Cliffe to return to their protection or their workhouse! The instinct of freedom was strong in the poor boy—quick and strong as in the beast of the field, or the bird of the air. He betook himself to the Moors (one of his earliest and favourite haunts) with a vague assurance of safety in the deep solitude of those wide-spreading meadows, and the close coppices that surrounded them: and at little more than twelve years of age he began a course of lonely, half-savage, self-dependent life, such as has been rarely heard of in this civilized country. How he lived is to a certain point a mystery. Not by stealing. That was agreed on all hands—except indeed, so far as a few roots of turnips and potatoes, and a few ears of green corn, in their several seasons, may be denominated theft. Ripe corn for his winter's hoard, he gleaned after the fields were cleared, with a scrupulous honesty that might have read a lesson to peasant children of a happier nurture. And they who had opportunities to watch the process, said that it was curious to see him bruise the grain between large stones, knead the rude flour with fair water, mould his simple cakes, and then bake them in a primitive oven formed by his own labour in a dry bank of the coppice, and heated by rotten wood shaken from the tops of the trees, (which he climbed like a squirrel,) and kindled by a flint and a piece of an old horseshoe:—such was his unsophisticated cookery! Nuts and berries from the woods; fish from the Kennett—caught with such tackle as might be constructed of a stick and a bit of packthread, with a strong pin or needle formed into a hook; and perhaps an occasional rabbit or partridge, entrapped by some such rough and inartificial contrivance, formed his principal support; a modified, and, according to his vague notions of right and wrong, an innocent form of poaching, since he sought only what was requisite for his own consumption, and would have shunned as a sin the killing game to sell. Money, indeed, he little needed. He formed his bed of fern or dead grass, in the deepest recesses of the coppice—a natural shelter; and the renewal of raiment, which warmth and decency demanded, he obtained by emerging from his solitude, and joining such parties as a love of field sports brought into his vicinity in the pursuit of game—an inspiring combination of labour and diversion, which seemed to awaken something like companionship and sympathy even in this wild boy of the Moors,—one in which his knowledge of the usual haunts and habits of wild animals, his strength, activity, and actual insensibility to hardship or fatigue, rendered his services of more than ordinary value. There was not so good a hare-finder throughout that division of the county; and it was curious to observe how completely his skill in sportsmanship overcame the contempt with which grooms and gamekeepers, to say nothing of their less fine and more tolerant masters, were wont to regard poor Jesse's ragged garments, the sunburnt hair and skin, the want of words to express even his simple meaning, and most of all, the strange obliquity of taste which led him to prefer Kennett water to Kennett ale. Sportsmanship, sheer sportsmanship, carried him through all!

Jesse was, as I have said, the most popular hare-finder of the country-side, and during the coursing season was brought by that good gift into considerable communication with his fellow-creatures: amongst the rest with his involuntary landlord, John Cobham.

John Cobham was a fair specimen of an English yeoman of the old school—honest, generous, brave, and kind; but in an equal degree, ignorant, obstinate, and prejudiced. His first impression respecting Jesse had been one of strong dislike, fostered and cherished by the old labourer Daniel Thorpe, who, accustomed for twenty years to reign sole sovereign of that unpeopled territory, was as much startled at the sight of Jesse's wild, ragged figure, and sunburnt face, as Robinson Crusoe when he first spied the track of a human foot upon *his* desert island. It was natural that old Daniel should feel his monarchy, or, more correctly speaking, his viceroyalty,

invaded and endangered; and at least equally natural that he should communicate his alarm to his master, who sallied forth one November morning to the Moors, fully prepared to drive the intruder from his grounds, and resolved, if necessary, to lodge him in the county Bridewell before night.

But the good farmer, who chanced to be a keen sportsman, and to be followed that day by a favourite greyhound, was so dulcified by the manner in which the delinquent started a hare at the very moment of Venus's passing, and still more by the culprit's keen enjoyment of a capital single-handed course, (in which Venus had even excelled herself,) that he could not find in his heart to take any harsh measures against him, for that day at least, more especially as Venus seemed to have taken a fancy to the lad—so his expulsion was postponed to another season; and before that season arrived, poor Jesse had secured the goodwill of an advocate far more powerful than Venus—an advocate who, contrasted with himself, looked like Ariel by the side of Caliban, or Titania watching over Bottom the Weaver.

John Cobham had married late in life, and had been left, after seven years of happy wedlock, a widower with five children. In his family he may be said to have been singularly fortunate, and singularly unfortunate. Promising in no common degree, his sons and daughters, inheriting their mother's fragile constitution as well as her amiable character, fell victims one after another to the flattering and fatal disease which had carried her off in the prime of life; one of them only, the eldest son, leaving any issue; and his little girl, an orphan, (for her mother had died in bringing her into the world,) was now the only hope and comfort of her doting grandfather, and of a maiden sister who lived with him as housekeeper, and, having officiated as head-nurse in a nobleman's family, was well calculated to bring up a delicate child.

And delicate in all that the word conveys of beauty—delicate as the Virgins of Guido, or the Angels of Correggio, as the valley lily or the maiden rose—was at eight years old, the little charmer, Phœbe Cobham. But it was a delicacy so blended with activity and power, so light and airy, and buoyant and spirited, that the admiration which it awakened was wholly unmingled with fear. Fair, blooming, polished, and pure, her complexion had at once the colouring and the texture of a flower-leaf; and her regular and lovely features—the red smiling lips, the clear blue eyes, the curling golden hair, and the round yet slender figure—formed a most rare combination of childish beauty. The expression, too, at once gentle and lively, the sweet and joyous temper, the quick intellect, and the affectionate heart, rendered little Phœbe one of the most attractive children that the imagination can picture. Her grandfather idolized her; taking her with him in his walks, never weary of carrying her when her own little feet were tired—and it was wonderful how many miles those tiny feet, aided by the gay and buoyant spirit, would compass in the course of the day; and so bent upon keeping her constantly with him, and constantly in the open air, (which he justly considered the best means of warding off the approach of that disease which had proved so fatal to his family,) that he even had a pad constructed, and took her out before him on horseback.

A strange contrast formed the old farmer, so gruff and bluff-looking—with his stout square figure, his weather-beaten face, short grey hair, and dark bushy eyebrows—to the slight and graceful child, her aristocratic beauty set off by exactly the same style of paraphernalia that had adorned the young Lady Janes and Lady Marys, Mrs. Dorothy's former charge, and her habitual grace of demeanour adding fresh elegance to the most studied elegancies of the toilet! A strange contrast!—but one which seemed as nothing compared with that which was soon to follow: for Phœbe, happening to be with her grandfather and her great friend and playmate Venus, a jet-black greyhound of the very highest breed, whose fine-limbed and shining beauty was almost as elegant and aristocratic as that of Phœbe herself;—the little damsel, happening to be with her grandfather when, instigated by Daniel Thorpe's grumbling accusation of broken fences and I know not what, he was a second time upon the point of warning poor Jesse off the ground—was so moved by the culprit's tattered attire and helpless condition, as he stood twirling, between his long lean fingers, the remains of what had once been a hat, that she interceded most warmly in his behalf.

"Don't turn him off the Moors, grandpapa," said Phœbe, "pray don't! Never mind old Daniel! I'm sure he'll do no harm;—will you, Jesse? Venus likes him, grandpapa; see how she puts her pretty nose into his hand; and Venus never likes bad people. How often I have heard you say that! And *I* like him, poor fellow! He looks so thin and so pitiful. Do let him stay, dear grandpapa!"

And John Cobham sat down on the bank, and took the pitying child in his arms, and kissed and blessed her, and said, that, since she wished it, Jesse *should* stay; adding, in a sort of soliloquy, that he hoped she never would ask him to do what was wrong, for he could refuse her nothing.

And Jesse—what did he say to these, the first words of kindness that he had ever heard from human lips? or rather, what did he feel? for beyond a muttered "Thankye," speak he could not. But gratitude worked strongly in the poor boy's heart: gratitude!—so new, so overpowering, and inspired by one so sweet, so lovely, so gentle as his protectress, as far

as he was concerned, all-powerful; and yet a mere infant whom he might protect as well as serve! It was a strange mixture of feelings, all good, and all delightful; a stirring of impulses, a quickening of affections, a striking of chords never touched before. Substitute the sacred innocence of childhood for the equally sacred power of virgin purity, and his feelings of affectionate reverence, of devoted service and submission, much resembled those entertained by the Satyr towards "the holy shepherdess," in Fletcher's exquisite drama.* *Our*

> "Rough thing, who never knew
> Manners, nor smooth humanity,"

could not have spoken nor have thought such words as those of the satyr; but so far as our English climate and his unfruitful territory might permit, he put much of the poetry into action.

Sluggish of intellect, and uncouth of demeanour, as the poor lad seemed, it was quite wonderful how quickly he discovered the several ways in which he might best please and gratify his youthful benefactress.

Phœbe loved flowers; and from the earliest tuft of violets ensconced under the sunny southern hedge, to the last lingering sprig of woodbine shaded by some time-hallowed oak, the blossoms of the meadow and the coppice were laid under contribution for her posies.

Phœbe had her own little garden; and to fill that garden, Jesse was never weary of seeking after the roots of such wild plants as he himself thought pretty, or such as he found (one can hardly tell how) were considered by better judges to be worthy of a place in the parterre. The different orchises, for instance, the white and lilac primrose, the golden oxlip, the lily of the valley, the chequered fritillary, which blows so freely along the banks of the Kennett, and the purple campenula which covers with equal profusion the meadows of the Thames, all found their way to Phœbe's flowerplats. He brought her in summer evenings

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*That matchless Pastoral, "The Faithful Shepherdess," is so much less known than talked of, that I subjoin the passage in question. One more beautiful can hardly be found in the wide range of English poetry.

Satyr. Through yon same bending plain
That flings his arms down to the main;
And through these thick woods, have I run,
Whose depths have never kiss'd the sun;
Since the lusty spring began,
All to please my master, Pan,
Have I trotted without rest
To get him fruit; for at a feast
He entertains, this coming night,
His paramour, the Syrinx bright.
[*He sees Clorin and stands amazed.*
But behold a fairer sight!
By that heavenly form of thine,
Brightest fair, thou art divine,
Sprung from great, immortal race
Of the Gods; for in thy face
Shines more awful majesty,
Than dull, weak mortality
Dare with misty eyes behold
And live! Therefore on this mould
Slowly do I bend my knee,
In worship of thy deity.
Deign it, goddess, from my hand
To receive whate'er this land,
From her fertile womb doth send
Of her choice fruits; and but lend
Belief to that the Satyr tells:
Fairer by the famous wells
To this present day ne'er grew,
Never better nor more true.
Here be grapes whose lusty blood
Is the learned poet's good;
Sweeter yet did never crown
The head of Bacchus; nuts more brown
Than the squirrel whose teeth crack 'em.
Deign, oh fairest fair, to take 'em!
For these black-eyed Dryope
Hath often times commanded me,
With my clasped knee to climb;
See how well the lusty time
Hath deck'd their rising cheeks in red,
Such as on your lips is spread.
Here be berries for a queen,
Some be red, and some be green;
These are of that luscious sweet,
The great god Pan himself doth eat;
All these, and what the woods can yield,
The hanging mountain, or the field,
I freely offer, and ere long
Will bring you more, more sweet and strong;
Till when, humbly leave I take,
Lest the great Pan do awake,
That sleeping lies in a deep glade,
Under a broad beech's shade.
I must go,—I must run
Swifter than the fiery sun.

Clorin.

And all my fears go with thee!
What greatness or what private hidden power
Is there in me to draw submission
From this rude man and beast? sure I am mortal;
The daughter of a shepherd; he was mortal,
And she that bore me mortal: Prick my hand
And it will bleed; a fever shakes me, and
The selfsame wind that makes the young lambs shrink
Makes me a-cold. My fear says I am mortal.
Yet I have heard (my mother told it me,
And now I do believe it) if I keep
My virgin flower uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair,
No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,
Satyr, or other power, that haunts the groves,
Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion
Draw me to wander after idle fires,
Or voices calling me in dead of night
To make me follow and so tempt me on
Through mire and standing pools to find my swain.
Else why should this rough thing, who never knew
Manners nor smooth humanity, whose herds
Are rougher than himself, and more misshapen,
Thus mildly kneel to me? &c. &c.

Beaumont and Fletcher's Works, (Seward's edition,) vol. iii. p. 117—121.

How we track Milton's exquisite Comus in this no less exquisite pastoral Drama! and the imitation is so beautiful, that the perception of the plagiarism rather increases than diminishes the pleasure with which we read either deathless work. Republican although he were, the great poet sits a throned king upon Parnassus, privileged to cull flowers where he listeth in right of his immortal laurel-crown.

glowworms enough to form a constellation on the grass; and would spend half a July day in chasing for her some glorious insect, dragon-fly, or bee-bird, or golden beetle, or gorgeous butterfly. He not only bestowed upon her sloes, and dew-berries, and hazel-nuts "brown as the squirrel whose teeth crack 'em," but caught for her the squirrel itself. He brought her a whole litter of dormice, and tamed for her diversion a young magpie, whose first effort at flattery was "Pretty Phœbe!"

But his greatest present of all, most prized both by donor and receiver, (albeit her tender heart smote her as she accepted it, and she made her faithful slave promise most faithfully to take nests no more,) was a grand string of birds' eggs, long enough to hang in festoons round, and round, and round her play-room, and sufficiently various and beautiful to gratify more fastidious eyes than those of our little heroine.

To collect this rope of variously-tinted beads—a natural rosary—he had sought the mossy and hair-lined nest of the hedge-sparrow for her turquoise-like rounds; had scrambled up the chimney-corner to bear away those pearls of the land, the small white eggs of the house-martin; had found deposited in an old magpie's nest the ovals of the sparrow-hawk, red and smooth as the finest coral; had dived into the ground-mansion of the skylark for her lilac-tinted shells, and groped amongst the bushes for the rosy-tinted ones of the wood-lark; climbed the tallest trees for the sea-green eggs of the rooks; had pilfered the spotted treasures from the snug dwelling which the wren constructed in the eaves; and, worst of all—I hardly like to write it, I hardly care to think, that Jesse could have committed such an outrage,—saddest and worst of all, in the very midst of that varied garland might be seen the brown and dusky egg, as little showy as its quaker-like plumage, the dark brown egg, from which should have issued that "angel of the air," the songstress, famous in every land, the unparagoned nightingale. It is but just toward Jesse to add, that he took the nest in a mistake, and was quite unconscious of the mischief he had done until it was too late to repair it.

Of course these gifts were not only graciously accepted, but duly returned; cakes, apples, tarts, and gingerbread, halfpence in profusion, and now and then a new shilling, or a bright sixpence—all, in short, that poor Phœbe had to bestow, she showered upon her uncouth favourite, and she would fain have amended his condition by more substantial benefits; but authoritative as she was with her grandfather in other instances, in this alone her usual powers of persuasion utterly failed. Whether infected by old Daniel's dislike, (and be it observed, an unfounded prejudice, that sort of prejudice for which he who entertains it does not pretend to account even to himself, is unluckily not only one of the most contagious feelings in the world, but one of the most invincible:) whether Farmer Cobham were inoculated with old Daniel's hatred of Jesse, or had taken that very virulent disease the natural way, nothing could exceed the bitterness of the aversion which gradually grew up in his mind towards the poor lad. That Venus liked him, and Phœbe liked him, added strength to the feeling. He would have been ashamed to confess himself jealous of their good-will towards such an object, and yet most certainly jealous he was. He did not drive him from his shelter in the Moors, because he had unwarily passed his word—his word, which, with yeomanly pride, John Cobham held sacred as his bond—to let him remain until he committed some offence; but, for this offence, both he and Daniel watched and waited with an impatience and irritability which contrasted strangely with the honourable self-restraint that withheld him from direct abuse of his power.

For a long time, Daniel and his master waited in vain. Jesse, whom they had entertained some vague hope of chasing away by angry looks and scornful words, had been so much accustomed all his life long to taunts and contumely, that it was a great while before he became conscious of their unkindness; and when at last it forced itself upon his attention, he shrank away crouching and cowering, and buried himself in the closest recesses of the coppice, until the footstep of the reviler had passed by. One look at his sweet little friend repaid him twenty-fold; and although farmer Cobham had really worked himself into believing that there was danger in allowing the beautiful child to approach poor Jesse, and had therefore on different pretexts forbidden her visits to the Moors, she did yet happen in her various walks to encounter that devoted adherent oftener than would be believed possible by any one who has not been led to remark, how often, in this best of all possible worlds, an earnest and innocent wish does as it were fulfil itself.

At last, however, a wish of a very different nature came to pass. Daniel Thorpe detected Jesse in an actual offence against that fertile source of crime and misery, the game laws.

Thus the affair happened.

During many weeks, the neighbourhood had been infested by a gang of bold, sturdy pilferers, roving vagabonds, begging by day, stealing and poaching by night—who had committed such extensive devastations amongst the poultry and linen of the village, as well as the game in the preserves, that the whole population was upon the alert; and the lonely coppices of the Moors rendering that spot one peculiarly likely to attract the attention of the gang, old Daniel, reinforced by a stout lad as a sort of extra-guard, kept a most jealous watch over his territory.

Perambulating the outside of the wood one

evening at sunset, he heard the cry of a hare; and climbing over the fence, had the unexpected pleasure of seeing our friend Jesse in the act of taking a leveret still alive from the wire. "So, so, master Jesse! thou be'st turned poacher, be'st thou?" ejaculated Daniel, with a malicious chuckle, seizing, at one fell grip, the hare and the lad.

"Miss Phœbe!" ejaculated Jesse, submitting himself to the old man's grasp, but struggling to retain the leveret; "Miss Phœbe!"

"Miss Phœbe, indeed!" responded Daniel; "she saved thee once, my lad, but thy time 's come now. What do'st thee want of the leveret, mon? Do'st not thee know that 't is part of the evidence against thee? Well, he may carry that whilst I carry the snare. Master 'll be main glad to see un. He always suspected the chap. And, for the matter of that, so did I. Miss Phœbe, indeed! Come along, my mon, I warrant thou hast seen thy last o' Miss Phœbe. Come on wi' thee."

And Jesse was hurried as fast as Daniel's legs would carry him to the presence of farmer Cobham.

On entering the house (not the old deserted homestead of the Moors, but the comfortable dwelling-house at Aberleigh) Jesse delivered the panting, trembling leveret to the first person he met, with no other explanation than might be comprised in the words, "Miss Phœbe!" and followed Daniel quietly to the hall.

"Poaching, was he? Taking the hare from the wire? And you saw him? You can swear to the fact?" quoth John Cobham, rubbing his hands with unusual glee. "Well, now we shall be fairly rid of the fellow! Take him to the Chequers for the night, Daniel, and get another man beside yourself to sit up with him. It 's too late to disturb Sir Robert this evening. To-morrow morning we 'll take him to the Hall. See that the constable 's ready by nine o'clock. No doubt but Sir Robert will commit him to the county bridewell.

"Oh, grandpapa!" exclaimed Phœbe, darting into the room with the leveret in her arms, and catching the last words. "Oh, grandpapa! poor Jesse!"

"Miss Phœbe!" ejaculated the culprit.

"Oh, grandfather, it 's all my fault," continued Phœbe; "and if anybody is to go to prison, you ought to send me. I had been reading about Cowper's hares, and I wanted a young hare to tame: I took a fancy for one, and told poor Jesse! And to think of his going to prison for that!"

"And did you tell him to set a wire for the hare, Phœbe?"

"A wire! what does that mean?" said the bewildered child. "But I dare say," added she, upon Farmer Cobham's explaining the nature of the snare, "I dare say that the poachers set the wire, and that he only took up the hare for me, to please my foolish fancy! Oh, grandpapa! Poor Jesse!" and Phœbe cried as if her heart would break.

"God bless you, Miss Phœbe!" said Jesse.

"All this is nonsense!" exclaimed the unrelenting farmer. "Take the prisoner to the Chequers, Daniel, and get another man to keep you company in sitting up with him. Have as much strong beer as you like, and be sure to bring him and the constable here by nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Oh, grandfather, you 'll be sorry for this! I did not think you had been so hard-hearted!" sobbed Phœbe. "You 'll be very sorry for this."

"Yes, very sorry, that he will. God bless you, Miss Phœbe," said Jesse.

"What! does he threaten? Take him off, Daniel. And you, Phœbe, go to bed and compose yourself. Heaven bless you, my darling!" said the fond grandfather, smoothing her hair, as, the tears still chasing each other down her cheeks, she stood leaning against his knee. "Go to bed and to sleep, my precious! and you, Sally, bring me my pipe:" and wondering why the fulfilment of a strong desire should not make him happier, the honest farmer endeavoured to smoke away his cares.

In the meanwhile, old Daniel conducted Jesse to the Chequers, and having lodged him safely in an upper room, sought out "an ancient, trusty, drouthy crony," with whom he sate down to carouse in the same apartment with his prisoner. It was a dark, cold, windy, October night, and the two warders sate cosily by the fire, enjoying their gossip and their ale, while the unlucky delinquent placed himself pensively by the window. About midnight the two old men were startled by his flinging open the casement.

"Miss Phœbe! look! look!"

"What? where?" inquired Daniel.

"Miss Phœbe!" repeated the prisoner; and, looking in the direction to which Jesse pointed, they saw the flames bursting from Farmer Cobham's house.

In a very few seconds they had alarmed the family, and sprung forth in the direction of the fire; the prisoner accompanying them, unnoticed in the confusion.

"Luckily, master 's always insured to the value of all he 's worth, stock and goods," quoth the prudent Daniel.

"Miss Phœbe!" exclaimed Jesse: and even as he spoke he burst in the door, darted up the staircase, and returned with the trembling child in his arms, followed by aunt Dorothy and the frightened servants.

"Grandpapa! dear grandpapa! where is grandpapa? Will no one save my dear grandpapa?" cried Phœbe.

And, placing the little girl at the side of her aunt, Jesse again mounted the blazing staircase. For a few moments all gave him

up for lost. But he returned, tottering under the weight of a man scarcely yet aroused from heavy sleep, and half suffocated by the smoke and flames.

"Miss Phœbe! he's safe, Miss Phœbe!—Down, Venus, down—He's safe, Miss Phœbe! And now, I sha'n't mind going to prison, 'cause when I come back you'll be living at the *Moors*. Sha'n't you, Miss Phœbe? And I shall see you every day!"

One part of this speech turned out true, and another part false—no uncommon fate, by the way, of prophetic speeches, even when uttered by wiser persons than poor Jesse. Phœbe did come to live at the Moors, and he did not go to prison.

On the contrary, so violent was the revulsion of feeling in the honest hearts of the good yeoman, John Cobham, and his faithful servant, old Daniel, and so deep the remorse which they both felt for their injustice and unkindness towards the friendless lad, that there was considerable danger of their falling into the opposite extreme, and ruining him by sudden and excessive indulgence. Jesse, however, was not of a temperament to be easily spoilt. He had been so long an outcast from human society, that he had become as wild and shy as his old companions of the fields and the coppice, the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air. The hare which he had himself given to Phœbe was easier to tame than Jesse Cliffe.

Gradually, very gradually, under the gentle influence of the gentle child, this great feat was accomplished, almost as effectually, although by no means so suddenly, as in the well-known case of Cymon and Iphigenia, the most noted precedent upon record of the process of reaching the head through the heart. Venus, and a beautiful Welsh pony called Taffy, which her grandfather had recently purchased for her riding, had their share in the good deed; these two favourites being placed by Phœbe's desire under Jesse's sole charge and management; a measure which not only brought him necessarily into something like intercourse with the other lads about the yard, but ended in his conceiving so strong an attachment to the animals of whom he had the care, that before the winter set in he had deserted his old lair in the wood, and actually passed his nights in a vacant stall of the small stable appropriated to their use.

From the moment that John Cobham detected such an approach to the habits of civilized life as sleeping under a roof, he looked upon the wild son of the Moors, as virtually reclaimed, and so it proved. Every day he became more and more like his fellow-men. He abandoned his primitive oven, and bought his bread at the baker's. He accepted thankfully the decent clothing necessary to his attending Miss Phœbe in her rides round the country. He worked regularly and steadily at whatever labour was assigned to him, receiving wages like the other farm-servants; and finally it was discovered that one of the first uses he made of these wages was to purchase spelling-books and copy-books, and enter himself at an evening school, where the opening difficulties being surmounted, his progress astonished everybody.

His chief fancy was for gardening. The love, and, to a certain point, the knowledge of flowers which he had always evinced increased upon him every day;—and happening to accompany Phœbe on one of her visits to the young ladies at the Hall, who were much attached to the lovely little girl, he saw Lady Mordaunt's French garden, and imitated it the next year for his young mistress in wild flowers, after such a fashion as to excite the wonder and admiration of all beholders.

From that moment Jesse's destiny was decided. Sir Robert's gardener, a clever Scotchman, took great notice of him and offered to employ him at the Hall; but the Moors had to poor Jesse a fascination which he could not surmount. He felt that it would be easier to tear himself from the place altogether, than to live in the neighbourhood and not there. Accordingly he lingered on for a year or two, and then took a grateful leave of his benefactors, and set forth to London with the avowed intention of seeking employment in a great nursery-ground, to the proprietor of which he was furnished with letters, not merely from his friend the gardener, but from Sir Robert himself.

N. B. It is recorded that on the night of Jesse's departure, Venus refused her supper and Phœbe cried herself to sleep.

Time wore on. Occasional tidings had reached the Moors of the prosperous fortunes of the adventurer. He had been immediately engaged by the great nurseryman to whom he was recommended, and so highly approved, that in little more than two years he became foreman of the flower department; another two years saw him chief manager of the garden; and now, at the end of a somewhat longer period, there was a rumour of his having been taken into the concern as acting partner; a rumour which received full confirmation in a letter from himself, accompanying a magnificent present of shrubs, plants, and flower-roots, amongst which were two Dahlias, ticketed 'the Moors' and 'the Phœbe,' and announcing his intention of visiting his best and earliest friends in the course of the ensuing summer.

Still time wore on. It was full six months after this intimation, that on a bright morning in October, John Cobham, with two or three visiters from Belford, and his granddaughter Phœbe, now a lovely young woman, were coursing on the Moors. The towns-people had boasted of their greyhounds, and the old

sportsman was in high spirits from having beaten them out of the field.

"If that's your best dog," quoth John, "why, I'll be bound that our Snowball would beat him with one of his legs tied up. Talk of running such a cur as that against Snowball! Why there's Phœbe's pet, Venus, Snowball's great-grandam, who was twelve years old last May, and has not seen a hare these three seasons, shall give him the go-by in the first hundred yards. Go and fetch Venus, Daniel! It will do her heart good to see a hare again," added he, answering the looks rather than the words of his granddaughter, for she had not spoken, "and I'll be bound to say she'll beat him out of sight. He won't come in for a turn."

Upon Venus's arrival, great admiration was expressed at her symmetry and beauty; the greyness incident to her age having fallen upon her, as it sometimes does upon black greyhounds, in the form of small white spots, so that she appeared as if originally what the coursers call "ticked." She was in excellent condition, and appeared to understand the design of the meeting as well as any one present, and to be delighted to find herself once more in the field of fame. Her competitor, a yellow dog called Smoaker, was let loose, and the whole party awaited in eager expectation of a hare.

"Soho!" cried John Cobham, and off the dogs sprang; Venus taking the turn, as he had foretold, running as true as in the first season, doing all the work, and killing the hare, after a course which, for any part Smoaker took in it, might as well have been single-handed.

"Look how she's bringing the hare to my grandfather!" exclaimed Phœbe; "she always brings her game!"

And with the hare in her mouth, carefully poised by the middle of the back, she was slowly advancing towards her master, when a stranger, well dressed and well mounted, who had joined the party unperceived during the course, suddenly called "Venus!"

And Venus started, pricked up her ears as if to listen, and stood stock still.

"Venus!" again cried the horseman.

And Venus, apparently recognizing the voice, walked towards the stranger, (who by this time had dismounted,) laid the hare down at his feet, and then sprang up herself to meet and return his caresses.

"Jesse! It must be Jesse Cliffe!" said Phœbe, in a tone which wavered between exclamation and interrogatory.

"It can be none other," responded her grandfather. "I'd trust Venus beyond all the world in the matter of recognising an old friend, and we all know that except her old master and her young mistress, she never cared a straw for anybody but Jesse. It must be Jesse Cliffe, though to be sure he's so altered that how the bitch could find him out, is beyond my comprehension. It's remarkable," continued he in an under tone, walking away with Jesse from the Belford party, "that we five (counting Venus and old Daniel) should meet just on this very spot—isn't it? It looks as if we were to come together. And if you have a fancy for Phœbe, as your friend Sir Robert says you have, and if Phœbe retains her old fancy for you, (as I partly believe may be the case,) why my consent sha'n't be wanting. Don't keep squeezing my hand, man, but go and find out what she thinks of the matter."

Five minutes after this conversation, Jesse and Phœbe were walking together towards the house; what he said we have no business to inquire, but if blushes may be trusted, of a certainty the little damsel did not answer "No."

MISS PHILLY FIRKIN, THE CHINA WOMAN.

In Belford Regis, as in many of those provincial capitals of the south of England, whose growth and importance have kept pace with the increased affluence and population of the neighbourhood, the principal shops will be found clustered in the close, inconvenient streets of the antique portion of the good town; whilst the more showy and commodious modern buildings are quite unable to compete in point of custom with the old crowded localities, which seem even to derive an advantage from the appearance of business and bustle occasioned by the sharp turnings, the steep declivities, the narrow causeways, the jutting-out windows, and the various obstructions incident to the picturesque but irreglar street-architecture of our ancestors.

Accordingly, Oriel Street, in Belford,—a narrow lane, cribbed and confined on the one side by an old monastic establishment, now turned into almshouses, called the Oriel, which divided the street from that branch of the river called the Holy Brook, and on the other bounded by the market-place, whilst one end abutted on the yard of a great inn, and turned so sharply up a steep acclivity that accidents happened there every day, and the other *terminus* wound with an equally awkward curvature round the churchyard of St. Stephen's—this most strait and incommodious avenue of shops was the wealthiest quarter of the Borough. It was a provincial combination of Regent Street and Cheapside. The houses let for double their value; and, as a necessary consequence, goods sold there at pretty nearly the same rate; horse-people and foot-people jostled upon the pavement; coaches and

phaetons ran against each other in the road. Nobody dreamt of visiting Belford without wanting something or other in Oriel Street; and although noise, and crowd, and bustle, be very far from usual attributes of the good town, yet in driving through this favoured region on a fine day, between the hours of three and five, we stood a fair chance of encountering as many difficulties and obstructions from carriages, and as much din and disorder on the causeway, as we shall often have the pleasure of meeting with out of London.

One of the most popular and frequented shops in the street, and out of all manner of comparison the prettiest to look at, was the well-furnished glass and china warehouse of Philadelphia Firkin, spinster. Few things are indeed more agreeable to the eye than the mixture of glittering cut glass, with rich and delicate china, so beautiful in shape, colour, and material, which adorn a nicely-assorted show-room of that description. The manufactures of Sèvres, of Dresden, of Derby, and of Worcester, are really works of art, and very beautiful ones too; and even the less choice specimens have about them a clearness, a glossiness, and a nicety, exceedingly pleasant to look upon; so that a china-shop is in some sense a shop of temptation: and that it is also a shop of necessity, every housekeeper who knows to her cost the infinite number of plates, dishes, cups, and glasses, which contrive to get broken in the course of the year, (chiefly by that grand demolisher of crockery ware called Nobody,) will not fail to bear testimony.

Miss Philadelphia's was therefore a well-accustomed shop, and she herself was in appearance most fit to be its inhabitant, being a trim, prim little woman, neither old nor young, whose dress hung about her in stiff regular folds, very like the drapery of a china shepherdess on a mantel-piece, and whose pink and white complexion, skin, eyebrows, eyes, and hair, all tinted as it seemed with one dash of ruddy colour, had the same professional hue. Change her spruce cap for a wide-brimmed hat, and the damask napkin which she flourished in wiping her wares, for a china crook, and the figure in question might have passed for a miniature of the mistress. In one respect they differed. The china shepherdess was a silent personage. Miss Philadelphia was not; on the contrary, she was reckoned to make, after her own mincing fashion, as good a use of her tongue as any woman, gentle or simple, in the whole town of Belford.

She was assisted in her avocations by a little shopwoman, not much taller than a china mandarin, remarkable for the height of her comb, and the length of her ear-rings, whom she addressed sometimes as Miss Wolfe, sometimes as Marianne, and sometimes as Polly, thus multiplying the young lady's individuality by three; and a little shopman in apron and sleeves, whom, with equal ingenuity, she called by several appellations of Jack, Jonathan, and Mr. Lamb—mister!—but who was really such a cock-o'-my-thumb as might have been served up in a tureen, or baked in a pie-dish, without in the slightest degree abridging his personal dimensions. I have known him quite hidden behind a china jar, and as completely buried, whilst standing on tip-toe, in a crate, as the dessert-service which he was engaged in unpacking. Whether this pair of originals was transferred from a show at a fair to Miss Philly's warehouse, or whether she had picked them up accidentally, first one and then the other, guided by a fine sense of congruity, as she might match a wine-glass or a tea-cup, must be left to conjecture. Certain they answered her purpose, as well as if they had been the size of Gog and Magog; were attentive to the customers, faithful to their employer, and crept about amongst the china as softly as two mice.

The world went well with Miss Philly Firkin in the shop and out. She won favour in the sight of her betters by a certain prim, demure, simpering civility, and a power of multiplying herself as well as her little officials, like Yates or Matthews in a monopolologue, and attending to half-a-dozen persons at once; whilst she was no less popular amongst her equals in virtue of her excellent gift in gossiping. Nobody better loved a gentle tale of scandal, to sweeten a quiet cup of tea. Nobody evinced a finer talent for picking up whatever news happened to be stirring, or greater liberality in its diffusion. She was the intelligencer of the place—a walking chronicle.

In a word, Miss Philly Firkin was certainly a prosperous, and, as times go, a tolerably happy woman. To be sure, her closest intimates, those very dear friends, who, as our confidence gives them the opportunity, are so obliging as to watch our weakness and report our foibles,—certain of these bosom companions had been heard to hint, that Miss Philly, who had refused two or three good matches in her bloom, repented her of this cruelty, and would probably be found less obdurate now that suitors had ceased to offer. This, if true, was one hidden grievance, a flitting shadow upon a sunny destiny; whilst another might be found in a circumstance of which she was so far from making a secret, that it was one of her most frequent topics of discourse.

The calamity in question took the not unfrequent form of a next-door neighbour. On her right dwelt an eminent tinman with his pretty daughter, two of the most respectable, kindest, and best-conducted persons in the town; but on her left was an open bricked archway, just wide enough to admit a cart, surmounted by a dim and dingy representation of some horned animal, with "The Old Red Cow" written in white capitals above, and

"James Tyler, licensed to sell beer, ale, wine, and all sorts of spirituous liquors," below; and down the aforesaid passage, divided only by a paling from the spacious premises where her earthenware and coarser kinds of crockery were deposited, were the public-house, stables, cowhouses, and pigstyes of Mr. James Tyler, who added to his calling of publican, the several capacities of milkman, cattle dealer, and pig merchant, so that the place was one constant scene of dirt and noise and bustle without and within;—this Old Red Cow, in spite of its unpromising locality, being one of the best frequented houses in Belford, the constant resort of drovers, drivers, and cattle dealers, with a market dinner on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and a club called the Jolly Tailors, every Monday night.

Master James Tyler—popularly called Jem—was the very man to secure and increase this sort of custom. Of vast stature and extraordinary physical power, combined with a degree of animal spirits not often found in combination with such large proportions, he was at once a fit ruler over his four-footed subjects in the yard, a miscellaneous and most disorderly collection of cows, horses, pigs, and oxen, to say nothing of his own five boys, (for Jem was a widower,) each of whom, in striving to remedy, was apt to enhance the confusion, and an admirable lord of misrule at the drovers' dinners and tradesmen's suppers over which he presided. There was a mixture of command and good-humour, of decision and fun, in the gruff, bluff, weather-beaten countenance, surmounted with its rough shock of coal-black hair, and in the voice loud as a stentor, with which he now guided a drove of oxen, and now roared a catch, that his listeners in either case found irresistible. Jem Tyler was the very spirit of vulgar jollity, and could, as he boasted, run, leap, box, wrestle, drink, sing, and shoot (he had been a keeper in his youth, and still retained the love of sportmanship which those who imbibe it early seldom lose) with any man in the county. He was discreet, too, for a man of his occupation; knew precisely how drunk a journeyman tailor ought to get, and when to stop a fight between a Somersetshire cattle-dealer and an Irish pig-driver. No inquest had ever sat upon any of his customers. Small wonder, that with such a landlord the Old Red Cow should be a hostelry of unmatched resort and unblemished reputation.

The chief exception to Jem Tyler's almost universal popularity was beyond all manner of doubt his fair neighbour Miss Philadelphia Firkin. She, together with her trusty adherents, Miss Wolfe and Mr. Lamb, held Jem, his alehouse, and his customers, whether tailor, drover, or dealer, his yard and its contents, horse or donkey, ox or cow, pig or dog, in unmeasured and undisguised abhorrence: she threatened to indict the place as a nuisance, to appeal to the mayor; and upon "some good-natured friend" telling her that mine host had snapped his fingers at her as a clattering old maid, she did actually go so far as to speak to her landlord, who was also Jem's, upon the iniquity of his doings. This worthy happening, however, to be a great brewer, knew better than to dismiss a tenant whose consumption of double X was so satisfactory. So that Miss Firkin took nothing by her motion beyond a few of those smoothening and pacificatory speeches, which, when administered to a person in a passion, have, as I have often observed, a remarkable tendency to exasperate the disease.

At last, however, came a real and substantial grievance, an actionable trespass; and although Miss Philly was a considerable loser by the mischance, and a lawsuit is always rather a questionable remedy for pecuniary damage, yet such was the keenness of her hatred towards poor Jem, that I am quite convinced that in her inmost heart (although being an excellent person in her way, it is doubtful whether she told herself the whole truth in the matter) she rejoiced at a loss which would enable her to take such signal vengeance over her next-door enemy. An obstreperous cow, walking backward instead of forward, as that placid animal when provoked has the habit of doing, came in contact with a weak part of the paling which divided Miss Firkin's back premises from Master Tyler's yard, and not only upset Mr. Lamb into a crate of crockery which he was in the act of unpacking, to the inexpressible discomfiture of both parties, but Miss Wolfe, who, upon hearing the mixture of crash and squall, ran to the rescue, found herself knocked down by a donkey who had entered at the breach, and was saluted as she rose by a peal of laughter from young Sam Tyler, Jem's eldest hope, a thorough Pickle, who, accompanied by two or three other chaps as unlucky as himself, sat quietly on a gate surveying and enjoying the mischief.

"I'll bring an action against the villain!" ejaculated Miss Philly, as soon as the enemy was driven from her quarters, and her china and her dependants set upon their feet:—"I'll take the law of him!" And in this spirited resolution did mistress, shopman, and shopwoman, find comfort for the losses, the scratches, and the bruises of the day.

This affray commenced on a Thursday evening towards the latter end of March; and it so happened that we had occasion to send to Miss Philly early the next morning for a cart-load of garden-pots for the use of my geraniums.

Our messenger was, as it chanced, a certain lad by name Dick Barnett, who has lived with us off and on ever since he was the height of the table, and who originally a saucy, lively, merry boy, arch, quick-witted, and amusing, has been indulged in giving vent to all manner

of impertinence until he has become a sort of privileged person, and takes, with high or low, a freedom of speech that might become a lady's page or a king's jester. Every now and then we feel that this license, which in a child of ten years old we found so diverting, has become inconvenient in a youth of seventeen, and favour him and ourselves with a lecture accordingly. But such is the force of inveterate habit, that our remonstrances upon this subject are usually so much gravity wasted upon him and upon ourselves. He, in the course of a day or two, comes forth with some fresh prank more amusing than before, and we (I grieve to confess such a weakness) resume our laughter.

To do justice, however, to this modern Robin Goodfellow, there was most commonly a fund of good-nature at the bottom of his wildest tricks or his most egregious romances, —for in the matter of a jest he was apt to draw pretty largely from an inventive faculty of remarkable fertility; he was constant in his attachments, whether to man or beast, loyal to his employers, and although idle and uncertain enough in other work, admirable in all that related to the stable or the kennel—the best driver, best rider, best trainer of a greyhound, and best finder of a hare, in all Berkshire.

He was, as usual, accompanied on this errand by one of his four-footed favourites, a delicate snow-white greyhound called Mayfly, of whom Miss Philly flatteringly observed, that "she was as beautiful as china;" and upon the civil lady of the shop proceeding to inquire after the health of his master and mistress, and the general news of Aberleigh, master Ben, who well knew her proficiency in gossiping, and had the dislike of a man and a rival to any female practitioner in that art, checked at once this condescending overture to conversation by answering with more than his usual consequence: "The chief news that I know, Miss Firkin, is, that our geraniums are all pining away for want of fresh earth, and that I am sent in furious haste after a load of your best garden-pots. There's no time to be lost, I can tell you, if you mean to save their precious lives. Miss Ada is upon her last legs, and Master Diomede in a galloping consumption—two of our prime geraniums, ma'am!" quoth Dick, with a condescending nod to Miss Wolfe, as that Lilliputian lady looked up at him with a stare of unspeakable mystification; "queerish names, a'nt they? Well, there are the patterns of the sizes, and there's the order; so if your little gentleman will but look the pots out, I have left the cart in Jem Tyler's yard, (I've a message to Jem from master,) and we can pack 'em over the paling. I suppose you've a ladder for the little man's use, in loading carts and wagons: if not Jem or I can take them from him. There is not a better-natured fellow in England than Jem Tyler, and he'll be sure to do me a good turn any day, if it's only for the love of our Mayfly here. He bred her, poor thing, and is well-nigh as fond of her as if she was a child of his own; and so's Sam. Nay, what's the matter with you all?" pursued Dick, as at the name of Jem Tyler Miss Wolfe turned up her hands and eyes, Mr. Lamb let fall the pattern pots, and Miss Philly flung the order upon the counter—"What the deuce is come to the people?"

And then out burst the story of the last night's adventure, of Mr. Lamb's scratched face, which indeed was visible enough, of Miss Wolfe's bruises, of the broken china, the cow, the donkey, and the action at law.

"Whew!" whistled Dick in an aside whistle; "going to law is she? We must pacify her if we can," thought he, "for a lawsuit's no joke, as poor Jem would find. Jem must come and speechify. It's hard if between us we can't manage a woman."

"Sad affair, indeed, Miss Firkin," said Dick, aloud, in a soft, sympathising tone, and with a most condoling countenance; "it's unknown what obstropolous creatures cows and donkies are, and what mischief they do amongst gimcracks. A brute of a donkey got into our garden last summer, and ate up half-a-dozen rose-trees and fuchsias, besides trampling over the flower-beds. One of the roses was a present from France, worth five guineas. I hope Mr. Lamb and Miss Wolfe are not much hurt. Very sad affair! strange too that it should happen through Jem Tyler's cattle—poor Jem, who had such a respect for you!"

"Respect for me!" echoed Miss Philly, "when he called me a chattering old maid,—Mrs. Loveit heard him. Respect for me!"

"Ay," continued Dick,—"it was but last Monday was a fortnight that Kit Mahony, the tall pig-dealer, was boasting of the beauty of the Tipperary lasses, and crying down our English ladies, whereupon, although the tap was full of Irish chaps, Jem took the matter up, and swore that he could show Kit two as fine women in this very street—you, ma'am, being one, and Miss Parsons the other—two as fine women as ever he saw in Tipperary. Nay, he offered to lay any wager, from a pot of double X to half a score of his own pigs, that Kit should confess it himself. Now, if that's not having a respect I don't know what is," added Dick, with much gravity; "and I put it to your good sense, whether it is not more likely that Mrs. Loveit, who is as deaf as a post, should be mistaken, than that he should offer to lay such a wager respecting a lady of whom he had spoken so disparagingly."

"This will do," thought Dick to himself as he observed the softening of Miss Philly's features and noted her very remarkable and unnatural silence—"this will do;" and reiterating his request that the order might be got ready, he walked out of the shop.

"You'll find that I have settled the matter," observed the young gentleman to Jem Tyler, after telling him the story, "and you have nothing to do but to follow up my hints. Did not I manage her famously? 'T was well I recollected your challenge to Mahony, about that pretty creature, Harriet Parsons. It had a capital effect, I promise you. Now go and make yourself decent; put on your Sunday coat, wash your face and hands, and don't spare for fine speeches. Be off with you."

"I shall laugh in her face," replied Jem.

"Not you," quoth his sage adviser: "just think of the length of a lawyer's bill, and you'll be in no danger of laughing. Besides, she's really a niceish sort of a body enough, a tidyish little soul in her way, and you're a gay widower—so who knows?"

And home went Dick, chuckling all the way, partly at his own good management, partly at the new idea which his quick fancy had started.

About a fortnight after, I had occasion to drive into Belford, attended as usual by master Richard. The bells of St. Stephen's were ringing merrily as we passed down Oriel Street, and happening to look up at the well-known sign of the Old Red Cow, we saw that celebrated work of art surmounted by a bow of white ribbons—a bridal favour. Looking onward to Miss Philly's door, what should we perceive but Mr. Lamb standing on the step with a smilar cockade, half as big as himself, stuck in his hat; whilst Miss Wolfe stood simpering behind the counter, dispensing to her old enemy Sam, and four other grinning boys in their best apparel, five huge slices of bridecake!

The fact was clear. Jem Tyler and Miss Philly were married.

THE GROUND-ASH.

Amongst the many pleasant circumstances attendant on a love of flowers—that sort of love which leads us into the woods for the earliest primrose, or to the river side for the latest forget-me-not, and carries us to the parching heath or the watery mere to procure for the cultivated, or, if I may use the expression, the *tame* beauties of the parterre, the soil that they love; amongst the many gratifications which such pursuits bring with them, such as seeing in the seasons in which it shows best, the prettiest, coyest, most unhackneyed scenery, and taking, with just motive enough for stimulus and for reward, drives and walks which approach to fatigue, without being fatiguing; amongst all the delights consequent on a love of flowers, I know none greater than the half-unconscious and wholly unintended manner in which such expeditions make us acquainted with the peasant children of remote and out-of-the-way regions, the inhabitants of the wild woodlands and still wilder commons of the hilly part of the north of Hampshire, which forms so strong a contrast with this sunny and populous county of Berks, whose very fields are gay and neat as gardens, and whose roads are as level and even as a gravel-walk.

Two of the most interesting of these flower-formed acquaintances, were my little friends Harry and Bessy Leigh.

Every year I go to the Everly woods, to gather wild lilies of the valley. It is one of the delights that May—the charming, ay, and the merry month of May, which I love as fondly as ever that bright and joyous season was loved by our older poets—regularly brings in her train; one of those rational pleasures in which (and it is the great point of superiority over pleasures that are artificial and worldly) there is no disappointment. About four years ago, I made such a visit. The day was glorious, and we had driven through lanes perfumed by the fresh green birch, with its bark silvery and many-tinted, and over commons where the very air was loaded with the heavy fragrance of the furze, an odour resembling in richness its golden blossoms, just as the scent of the birch is cool, refreshing, and penetrating, like the exquisite colour of its young leaves, until we reached the top of the hill, where, on one side, the enclosed wood, where the lilies grow, sank gradually, in an amphitheatre of natural terraces, to a piece of water at the bottom; whilst on the other, the wild open heath formed a sort of promontory overhanging a steep ravine, through which a slow and sluggish stream crept along amongst stunted alders, until it was lost in the deep recesses of Lidhurst Forest, over the tall trees of which we literally looked down. We had come without a servant; and on arriving at the gate of the wood with neither human figure nor human habitation in sight, and a high-blooded and high-spirited horse in the phaeton, we began to feel all the awkwardness of our situation. My companion, however, at length espied a thin wreath of smoke issuing from a small clay-built hut thatched with furze, built against the steepest part of the hill, of which it seemed a mere excrescence, about half-way down the declivity; and, on calling aloud, two children, who had been picking up dry stumps of heath and gorse, and collecting them in a heap for fuel at the door of their hovel, first carefully deposited their little load, and then came running to know what we wanted.

If we had wondered to see human beings living in a habitation, which, both for space and appearance, would have been despised by a pig of any pretension, as too small and too mean for his accommodation, so we were again surprised at the strange union of poverty and

content evinced by the apparel and countenances of its young inmates. The children, bareheaded and barefooted, and with little more clothing than one shabby-looking garment, were yet as fine, sturdy, hardy, ruddy, sunburnt urchins, as one should see on a summer day. They were clean, too: the stunted bit of raiment was patched, but not ragged; and when the girl, (for, although it was rather difficult to distinguish between the brother and sister, the pair were of different sexes,) when the bright-eyed, square-made, upright little damsel clasped her two brown hands together, on the top of her head, pressed down her thick curls, looking at us and listening to us with an air of the most intelligent attention that returned our curiosity with interest; and when the boy, in answer to our inquiry if he could hold a horse, clutched the reins with his small fingers, and planted himself beside our high-mettled steed with an air of firm determination, that seemed to say, "I'm your master!—Run away if you dare!" we both of us felt that they were subjects for a picture, and that, though Sir Joshua might not have painted them, Gainsborough and our own Collins would.

But besides their exceeding picturesqueness, the evident content, and helpfulness, and industry of these little creatures, were delightful to look at and to think of. In conversation they were at once very civil and respectful (Bessy dropping her little curtsy, and Harry putting his hand to the lock of hair where the hat should have been, at every sentence they uttered) and perfectly frank and unfearing. In answer to our questions, they told us that "Father was a broom-maker, from the low country; that he had come to these parts and married mother, and built their cottage, because houses were so scarce hereabouts, and because of its convenience to the heath; that they had done very well till the last winter, when poor father had had the fever for five months, and they had had much ado to get on; but that father was brave again now, and was building *another house* (house!!) larger and finer, upon Squire Benson's lands: the squire had promised them a garden from the waste, and mother hoped to keep a pig. They were trying to get all the money they could to buy the pig; and what his honour had promised them for holding the horse, was all to be given to mother for that purpose."

It was impossible not to be charmed with these children. We went again and again to the Everly wood, partly to gather lilies, partly to rejoice in the trees with their young leaves so beautiful in texture as well as in colour, but chiefly to indulge ourselves in the pleasure of talking to the children, of adding something to their scanty stock of clothing, (Bessy ran as fast as her feet could carry her to the clear pool at the bottom of the wood, to look at herself in her new bonnet,) and of assisting in the accumulations of the Grand Pig Savings' Bank, by engaging Harry to hold the horse, and Bessy to help fill the lily basket.

This employment, by showing that the lilies had a money value, put a new branch of traffic into the heads of these thoughtful children, already accustomed to gather heath for their father's brooms, and to collect the dead furze which served as fuel to the family. After gaining permission of the farmer who rented the wood, and ascertaining that we had no objection, they set about making nosegays of the flowers, and collecting the roots for sale, and actually stood two Saturdays in Belford market (the smallest merchants of a surety that ever appeared in that rural Exchange) to dispose of their wares; having obtained a cast in a wagon there and back, and carrying home faithfully every penny of their gainings, to deposit in the common stock.

The next year we lost sight of them. No smoke issued from the small chimney by the hill-side. The hut itself was half demolished by wind and weather; its tenants had emigrated to the new house on Squire Benson's land; and after two or three attempts to understand and to follow the directions as to the spot given us by the good farmer at Everly, we were forced to give up the search.

Accident, the great discoverer and recoverer of lost goods, at last restored to us these good little children. It happened as follows:—

In new potting some large hydrangeas, we were seized with a desire to give the blue tinge to the petals, which so greatly improves the beauty of that fine bold flower, and which is so desirable when they are placed, as these were destined to be, in the midst of red and pink blossoms, fuchsias, salvis, and geraniums. Accordingly, we sallied forth to a place called the Moss, a wild tract of moorland lying about a mile to the right of the road to Everly, and famous for the red bog, produced, I presume, by chalybeate springs, which, when mixed with the fine Bagshot silver sand, is so effectual in changing the colour of flowers.

It was a bleak gusty day in February, raining by fits, but not with sufficient violence to deter me from an expedition to which I had taken a fancy. Putting up, therefore, the head and apron of the phaeton, and followed by one lad (the shrewd boy Dick) on horseback, and another (John, the steady gardening youth) in a cart laden with tubs and sacks, spades and watering-pots, to procure and contain the bog mould, (for we were prudently determined to provide for all emergencies, and to carry with us fit receptacles to receive our treasure, whether it presented itself in the form of red earth or of red mud,) our little procession set forth early in the afternoon, towards the wildest and most dreary piece of scenery that I have ever met with in this part of the country.

Wild and dreary of a truth was the Moss,

and the stormy sky, the moaning wind, and the occasional gushes of driving rain, suited well with the dark and cheerless region into which we had entered by a road, if a rude cart-track may be so called, such as shall seldom be encountered in this land of Macadamisation. And yet, partly perhaps from their novelty, the wild day and the wild scenery had for me a strange and thrilling charm. The ground, covered with the sea-green moss, whence it derived its name, mingled in the higher parts with brown patches of heather, and dark bushes of stunted furze, was broken with deep hollows full of stagnant water; some almost black, others covered with the rusty scum which denoted the presence of the powerful mineral, upon whose agency we relied for performing that strange piece of natural magic which may almost be called the transmutation of flowers.

Towards the ruddiest of these pools, situated in a deep glen, our active coadjutors, leaving phaeton, cart, and horses, on the brow of the hill, began rolling and tossing the several tubs, buckets, watering-pots, sacks, and spades, which were destined for the removal and conveyance of the much coveted-bog; we followed, amused and pleased, as, in certain moods, physical and mental, people are pleased and amused at self-imposed difficulties, down the abrupt and broken descent; and for some time the process of digging among the mould at the edge of the bank went steadily on.

In a few minutes, however Dick, whose quick and restless eye was never long bent on any single object, most of all when that object presented itself in the form of work, exclaimed to his comrade, "Look at those children wandering about amongst the firs, like the babes in the wood in the old ballad. What can they be about?" And looking in the direction to which he pointed, we saw, amidst the gloomy fir plantations, which formed a dark and massive border nearly round the Moss, our old friends Harry and Bessy Leigh, collecting, as it seemed, the fir cones with which the ground was strewed and depositing them carefully in a large basket.

A manful shout from my companion soon brought the children to our side—good, busy, cheerful, and healthy-looking as ever, and marvellously improved in the matter of equipment. Harry had been promoted to a cap, which added the grace of a flourish to his bow; Bessy had added the luxury of a pinafore to her nondescript garments; and both pairs of little feet were advanced to the certain dignity, although somewhat equivocal comfort, of shoes and stockings.

The world had gone well with them, and with their parents. The house was built. Upon remounting the hill, and advancing a little farther into the centre of the Moss, we saw the comfortable low-browed cottage, full of light and shadow, of juttings out, and corners and angles of every sort and description, with a garden stretching along the side, backed and sheltered by the tall impenetrable plantation, a wall of trees, against whose dark masses a wreath of light smoke was curling, whose fragrance seemed really to perfume the winter air. The pig had been bought, fatted, and killed; but other pigs were inhabiting the sty, almost as large as their former dwelling, which stood at the end of their garden; and the children told with honest joy how all this prosperity had come about. Their father, taking some brooms to my kind friend Lady Denys, had seen some of the ornamental baskets used for flowers upon a lawn, and had been struck with the fancy of trying to make some, decorated with fir cones; and he had been so successful in this profitable manufacture, that he had more orders than he could execute. Lady Denys had also, with characteristic benevolence, put the children to her Sunday-school. One misfortune had a little overshadowed the sunshine. Squire Benson had died, and the consent to the erection of the cottage being only verbal, the attorney who managed for the infant heir, a ward in Chancery, had claimed the property. But the matter had been compromised upon the payment of such a rent as the present prospects of the family would fairly allow. Besides collecting fir cones for the baskets, they picked up all they could in that pine forest, (for it was little less,) and sold such as were discoloured, or otherwise unfit for working up, to Lady Denys and other persons who liked the fine aromatic odour of these the pleasantest of pastilles, in their dressing-room or drawing-room fires. "Did I like the smell? We had a cart there—might they bring us a hamper-full?" And it was with great difficulty that a trifling present (for we did not think of offering money *as payment*) could be forced upon the grateful children. "We," they said, "had been their first friends." For what very small assistance the poor are often deeply, permanently thankful! Well says the great poet—

> "I've heard of hearts unkind, good deeds
> With ill deeds still returning;
> Alas, the gratitude of man
> Hath oftener left me mourning!"
>
> WORDSWORTH.

Again for above a year we lost sight of our little favourites, for such they were with both of us; though absence, indisposition, business, company—engagements, in short, of many sorts—combined to keep us from the Moss for upwards of a twelvemonth. Early in the succeeding April, however, it happened that, discussing with some morning visiters the course of a beautiful winding brook, (one of the tributaries to the Loddon, which bright and brimming river has nearly as many sources as the Nile,) one of them observed that the well-head was in Lanton Wood, and

that it was a bit of scenery more like the burns of the North Countrie (my visiter was a Northumbrian) than anything he had seen in the south. Surely I had seen it? I was half ashamed to confess that I had not—(how often are we obliged to confess that we have not seen the beauties which lie close to our doors, too near for observation!)—and the next day proving fine, I determined to repair my omission.

It was a soft balmy April morning, just at that point of the flowery spring when violets and primroses are lingering under the northern hedgerows, and cowslips and orchises peeping out upon sunny banks. My driver was the clever, shrewd, arch boy Dick; and the first part of our way lay along the green winding lanes which lead to Everly; we then turned to the left, and putting up our phaeton at a small farm-house, where my attendant (who found acquaintances everywhere) was intimate, we proceeded to the wood; Dick accompanying me, carrying my flower-basket, opening the gates, and taking care of my dog Dash, a very beautiful thorough-bred Old English spaniel, who was a little apt, when he got into a wood, to run after the game, and forget to come out again.

I have seldom seen any thing in woodland scenery more picturesque and attractive than the old coppice of Lanton, on that soft and balmy April morning. The underwood was nearly cut, and bundles of long split poles for hooping barrels were piled together against the tall oak trees, bursting with their sap; whilst piles of fagots were built up in other parts of the copse, and one or two saw-pits, with light open sheds erected over them, whence issued the measured sound of the saw and the occasional voices of the workmen, almost concealed by their subterranean position, were placed in the hollows. At the far side of the coppice, the operation of hewing down the underwood was still proceeding, and the sharp strokes of the axe and the bill, softened by distance, came across the monotonous jar of the never-ceasing saw.

The surface of the ground was prettily tumbled about, comprehending as pleasant a variety of hill and dale as could well be comprised in some thirty acres. It declined, however, generally speaking, towards the centre of the coppice, along which a small, very small rivulet, scarcely more than a runlet, wound its way in a thousand graceful meanders. Tracking upward the course of the little stream, we soon arrived at that which had been the ostensible object of our drive—the spot whence it sprung.

It was a steep irregular acclivity on the highest side of the wood, a mound, I had almost said a rock, of earth, cloven in two about the middle, but with so narrow a fissure that the brushwood which grew on either side nearly filled up the opening, so that the source of the spring still remained concealed, although the rapid gushing of the water made a pleasant music in that pleasant place; and here and there a sunbeam, striking upon the sparkling stream, shone with a bright and glancing light amidst the dark ivies, and brambles, and mossy stumps of trees, that grew around.

This mound had apparently been cut a year or two ago, so that it presented an appearance of mingled wildness and gaiety, that contrasted very agreeably with the rest of the coppice; whose trodden-down flowers I had grieved over, even whilst admiring the picturesque effect of the woodcutters and their several operations. Here, however, reigned the flowery spring in all her glory. Violets, pansies, orchises, oxslips, the elegant wood-sorrel, the delicate wood anemone, and the enamelled wild hyacinth, were sprinkled profusely amongst the mosses, and lichens, and dead leaves, which formed so rich a carpet beneath our feet. Primroses, above all, were there of almost every hue, from the rare and pearly white, to the deepest pinkish purple, coloured by some diversity of soil, the pretty freak of nature's gardening; whilst the common yellow blossom—commonest and prettiest of all—peeped out from amongst the boughs in the stump of an old willow, like (to borrow the simile of a dear friend, now no more) a canary bird from its cage. The wild geranium was already showing its pink stem and scarlet-edged leaves, themselves almost gorgeous enough to pass for flowers; the periwinkle, with its wreaths of shining foliage, was hanging in garlands over the precipitous descent; and the lily of the valley, the fragrant wood-roof, and the silvery wild garlic, were just peeping from the earth in the most sheltered nooks. Charmed to find myself surrounded by so much beauty, I had scrambled, with much ado, to the top of the woody cliff, (no other word can convey an idea of its precipitous abruptness,) and was vainly attempting to trace by my eye the actual course of the spring, which was, by the clearest evidence of sound, gushing from the fount many feet below me; when a peculiar whistle of delight (for whistling was to Dick, although no ordinary proficient in our common tongue, another language,) and a tremendous scrambling amongst the bushes, gave token that my faithful attendant had met with something as agreeable to his fancy, as the primroses and orchises had proved to mine.

Guided by a repetition of the whistle, I soon saw my trusty adherent spanning the chasm like a Colossus, one foot on one bank, the other on the opposite—each of which appeared to me to be resting, so to say, on nothing—tugging away at a long twig that grew on the brink of the precipice, and exceedingly likely to resolve the inquiry as to the source of the Loddon, by plumping souse into the fountain-head. I, of course, called out to

warn him; and he equally, of course, went on with his labour without paying the slightest attention to my caution. On the contrary, having possessed himself of one straight slender twig, which, to my great astonishment, he wound round his fingers, and deposited in his pocket, as one should do by a bit of packthread, he apparently, during the operation, caught sight of another. Testifying his delight by a second whistle, which, having his knife in his mouth, one wonders how he could accomplish; and scrambling with the fearless daring of a monkey up the perpendicular bank, supported by strings of ivy, or ledges of roots, and clinging by hand and foot to the frail bramble or the slippery moss, leaping like a squirrel from bough to bough, and yet, by happy boldness, escaping all danger, he attained his object as easily as if he had been upon level ground. Three, four, five times was the knowing, joyous, triumphant whistle sounded, and every time with a fresh peril and a fresh escape. At last, the young gentleman, panting and breathless, stood at my side, and I began to question him as to the treasure he had been pursuing.

"It 's the ground-ash, ma'am," responded master Dick, taking one of the coils from his pocket; "the best riding-switch in the world. All the whips that ever were made are nothing to it. Only see how strong it is, how light, and how supple! You may twist it a thousand ways without breaking. It won't break, do what you will. Each of these, now, is worth half-a-crown or three shillings, for they are the scarcest things possible. They grow up at a little distance from the root of an old tree, like a sucker from a rose-bush. Great luck, indeed!" continued Dick, putting up his treasure with another joyful whistle; "it was but t'other day that Jack Barlow offered me half-a-guinea for four, if I could but come by them. I shall certainly keep the best, though, for myself — unless ma'am, you would be pleased to accept it for the purpose of whipping Dash." Whipping Dash!!! Well have I said that Dick was as saucy as a lady's page or a king's jester. Talk of whipping Dash! Why, the young gentleman knew perfectly well that I had rather be whipt myself twenty times over. The very sound seemed a profanation. Whip my Dash! Of course I read master Dick a lecture for this irreverent mention of my pet, who, poor fellow, hearing his name called in question, came up in all innocence to fondle me; to which grave remonstrance the hopeful youth replied by another whistle, half of penitence, half of amusement.

These discourses brought us to the bottom of the mound, and turning round a clump of hawthorn and holly, we espied a little damsel with a basket at her side, and a large knife in her hand, carefully digging up a large root of white primroses, and immediately recognised my old acquaintance, Bessy Leigh.

She was, as before, clean and healthy, and tidy, and unaffectedly glad to see me; but the joyousness and buoyancy which had made so much of her original charm, were greatly diminished. It was clear that poor Bessy had suffered worse griefs than those of cold and hunger; and upon questioning her, so it turned out.

Her father had died, and her mother had been ill, and the long hard winter had been hard to get through; and then the rent had come upon her, and the steward (for the young gentleman himself was a minor) had threatened to turn them out if it were not paid to a day — the very next day after that on which we were speaking; and her mother had been afraid they must go to the workhouse, which would have been a sad thing, because now she had got so much washing to do, and Harry was so clever at basket-making, that there was every chance, this rent once paid, of their getting on comfortably. "And the rent will be paid now, ma'am, thank God!" added Bessy, her sweet face brightening; "for we want only a guinea of the whole sum, and Lady Denys has employed me to get scarce wild-flowers for her wood, and has promised me half-a-guinea for what I have carried her, and this last parcel, which I am to take to the lodge to-night; and Mr. John Barlow, her groom, has offered Harry twelve-and-sixpence for five ground-ashes that Harry has been so lucky as to find by the spring, and Harry is gone to cut them: so that now we shall get on bravely, and mother need not fret any longer. I hope no harm will befall Harry in getting the ground-ash, though, for it 's a noted dangerous place. But he 's a careful boy."

Just at this point of her little speech, poor Bessy was interrupted by her brother, who ran down the declivity exclaiming, "They 're gone, Bessy!—they 're gone! somebody has taken them! the ground-ashes are gone!"

Dick put his hand irresolutely to his pocket, and then, uttering a dismal whistle, pulled it resolutely out again, with a hardness, or an affectation of hardness, common to all lads, from the prince to the stable-boy.

I also put my hand into my pocket, and found, with the deep disappointment which often punishes such carelessness, that I had left my purse at home. All that I could do, therefore, was to bid the poor children be comforted, and ascertain at what time Bessy intended to take her roots, which in the midst of her distress she continued to dig up, to my excellent friend Lady Denys. I then, exhorting them to hope the best, made my way quickly out of the wood.

Arriving at the gate, I missed my attendant. Before, however, I had reached the farm at which we had left our phaeton, I heard his

gayest and most triumphant whistle behind me. Thinking of the poor children, it jarred upon my feelings. "Where have you been loitering, Sir?" I asked, in a sterner voice than he had probably ever heard from me before.

"Where have I been?" replied he; "giving little Harry the ground-ashes, to be sure: I felt just as if I had stolen them. And now, I do believe," continued he, with a prodigious burst of whistling, which seemed to me as melodious as the song of the nightingale, "I do believe," quoth Dick, "that I am happier than they are. I would not have kept those ground-ashes, no, not for fifty pounds!"

MR. JOSEPH HANSON, THE HABERDASHER.

These are good days for great heroes; so far at least as regards the general spread and universal diffusion of celebrity. In the matter of fame, indeed, that grand bill upon posterity which is to be found written in the page of history, and the changes of empires, Alexander may, for aught I know, be nearly on a par with the Duke of Wellington; but in point of local and temporary tributes to reputation, the great ancient, king though he were, must have been far behind the great modern. Even that comparatively recent warrior, the Duke of Marlborough, made but a slight approach to the popular honours paid to the conqueror of Napoleon. A few alehouse signs and the ballad of "Marlbrook s'en va't en guerre," (for we are not talking now of the titles, and pensions, and palaces, granted to him by the Sovereign and the Parliament,) seem to have been the chief if not the only popular demonstrations vouchsafed by friends and enemies to the hero of Blenheim.

The name of Wellington, on the other hand, is necessarily in every man's mouth at every hour of every day. He is the universal godfather of every novelty, whether in art, in literature, or in science. Streets, bridges, places, crescents, terraces, and rail-ways, on the land; steam-boats on the water; balloons in the air, are all distinguished by that honoured appellation. We live in Wellington squares, we travel in Wellington coaches, we dine in Wellington hotels, we are educated in Wellington establishments, and are clothed from top to toe (that is to say the male half of the nation) in Wellington boots, Wellington cloaks, Wellington hats, each of which shall have been severally purchased at a warehouse bearing the same distinguished title.

Since every market town and almost every village in the kingdom, could boast a Wellington house, or a Waterloo house, emulous to catch some gilded ray from the blaze of their great namesake's glory, it would have been strange indeed if the linen-drapers and haberdashers of our good town of Belford Regis had been so much in the rear of fashion as to neglect this easy method of puffing off their wares. On the contrary, so much did our shopkeepers rely upon the influence of an illustrious appellation, that they seemed to despair of success unless sheltered by the laurels of the great commander, and would press his name into the service, even after its accustomed and legitimate forms of use seemed exhausted. Accordingly we had not only a Wellington house and a Waterloo house, but a new Waterloo establishment, and a genuine and original Duke of Wellington warehouse.

The new Waterloo establishment, a flashy, dashy shop in the market-place, occupying a considerable extent of frontage, and "conducted (as the advertisements have it) by Mr. Joseph Hanson, late of London," put forth by far the boldest pretensions of any magazine of finery and frippery in the town; and it is with that magnificent *store*, and with that only, that I intend to deal in the present story.

If the celebrated Mr. Puff, he of the Critic, who, although Sheridan probably borrowed the idea of that most amusing personage from the auctioneers and picture-dealers of Foote's admirable farces, first reduced to system the art of profitable lying, setting forth methodically (scientifically it would be called in these days) the different genera and species of that flourishing craft — if Mr. Puff himself were to revisit this mortal stage, he would lift up his hands and eyes in admiration and astonishment at the improvements which have taken place in the art from whence he took, or to which he gave, a name (for the fact is doubtful) the renowned art of Puffing!

Talk of the progress of society, indeed! of the march of intellect, and the diffusion of knowledge, of infant schools and adult colleges, of gas-lights and rail-roads, of steam-boats and steam-coaches, of literature for nothing, and science for less! What are they and fifty other such knick-knacks compared with the vast strides made by this improving age in the grand art of puffing? Nay, are they not for the most part mere implements and accessories of that mighty engine of trade? What is half the march of intellect, but puffery? Why do little children learn their letters at school, but that they may come hereafter to read puffs at college? Why but for the propagation of puffs do honorary lecturers hold forth upon science, and gratuitous editors circulate literature? Are not gas-lights chiefly used for their illumination, and steam-boats for their speed? And shall not history, which has given to one era the name of the age of gold, and has entitled another the age of silver, call this present nineteenth century the age of puffs?

Take up the first thing upon your table, the newspaper for instance, or the magazine, the decorated drawing-box, the Brahma pen, and twenty to one but a puff more or less direct shall lurk in the patent of the one, while a whole congeries of puffs shall swarm in bare and undisguised effrontery between the pages of the other.

Walk into the streets;—and what meet you there? Puffs! puffs! puffs! From the dead walls, chalked over with recommendations to purchase Mr. Such-an-one's blacking, to the walking placard insinuating the excellences of Mr. What-d'ye-call-him's Cream Gin*—from the bright resplendent brass-knob, garnished with the significant words "Office Bell," beside the door of an obscure surveyor, to the spruce carriage of a newly-arrived physician driving empty up and down the street, everything whether moveable or stationary is a puff.

But shops form, of course, the chief locality of the craft of puffing. The getting off of goods is its grand aim and object. And of all shops those which are devoted to the thousand and one articles of female decoration, the few things which women do, and the many which they do not want, stand pre-eminent in this great art of the nineteenth century.

Not to enter upon the grand manœuvres of the London establishments, the doors for carriages to set down and the doors for carriages to take up, indicating an affluence of customers, a degree of crowd and inconvenience equal to the King's Theatre on a Saturday night, or the queen's drawing-room on a birthday, and attracting the whole female world by that which in a fashionable cause the whole female world loves so dearly, confusion, pressure, heat and noise;—to say nothing of those bold schemes which require the multitudes of the metropolis to afford them the slightest chance of success, we in our good borough of Belford Regis, simple as it stands, had, as I have said, as pretty a show of speculating haberdashers as any country town of its inches could well desire; the most eminent of whom was beyond all question or competition, the proprietor of the New Waterloo Establishment, Mr. Joseph Hanson, late of London.

His shop displayed, as I have already intimated, one of the largest and showiest frontages in the market-place, and had been distinguished by a greater number of occupants and a more rapid succession of failures in the same line than any other in the town.

The last tenant, save one, of that celebrated warehouse—the penultimate bankrupt—had followed the beaten road of puffing, and announced his goods as the cheapest ever manufactured. According to himself, his handbills, and his advertisements, everything contained in that shop was so very much under prime cost, that the more he sold the sooner he must be ruined. To hear him, you would expect not only that he should give his ribbons and muslins for nothing, but that he should offer you a premium for consenting to accept of them. Gloves, handkerchiefs, night-caps, gown-pieces, every article at the door and in the window was covered with tickets, each nearly as large as itself, tickets that might be read across the market-place; and towns-people and country-people came flocking round about, some to stare and some to buy. The starers were, however, it is to be presumed, more numerous than the buyers, for notwithstanding his tickets, his handbills, and his advertisements, in less than six months the advertiser had failed, and that stock, never, as its luckless owner used to say, approached for cheapness, was sold off at half its original price.

Warned by his predecessor's fate, the next comer adopted a newer and a nobler style of attracting public attention. He called himself a steady trader of the old school, abjured cheapness as synonymous with cheating, disclaimed everything that savoured of a puff, denounced handbills and advertisements, and had not a ticket in his whole shop. He cited the high price of his articles as proofs of their goodness, and would have held himself disgraced for ever if he had been detected in selling a reasonable piece of goods. "He could not," he observed, "expect to attract the rabble by such a mode of transacting business; his aim was to secure a select body of customers amongst the nobility and gentry, persons who looked to quality and durability in their purchases, and were capable of estimating the solid advantages of dealing with a tradesman who despised the trumpery artifices of the day."

So high-minded a declaration, enforced too by much solemnity of utterance and appearance—the speaker being a solid, substantial, middle-aged man, equipped in a full suit of black, with a head nicely powdered, and a pen stuck behind his ear—such a declaration from so important a personage ought to have succeeded; but somehow or other it did not. His customers, gentle and simple, were more select than numerous, and in another six months the high-price man failed just as the low-price man had failed before him.

Their successor, Mr. Joseph Hanson, claimed to unite in his own person the several mer-

*He was a genius in his line (I had almost written an evil genius) who invented that rare epithet, that singular combination of the sweetest and purest of all luxuries, the most healthful and innocent of dainties, redolent of association so rural and poetical, with the vilest abominations of great cities, the impure and disgusting source of misery and crime. Cream Gin! The union of such words is really a desecration of one of nature's most genial gifts, as well as a burlesque on the charming old pastoral poets; a flagrant offence against morals, and against that which in its highest sense may almost be considered a branch of morality—taste.

its of both his antecedents. Cheaper than the cheapest, better, finer, more durable, than the best, nothing at all approaching his assortment of linen-drapery had, as he swore, and his head shopman, Mr. Thomas Long, asseverated, ever been seen before in the streets of Belford Regis; and the oaths of the master and the asseverations of the man, together with a very grand display of fashions and finery, did really seem, in the first instance at least, to attract more customers than had of late visited those unfortunate premises.

Mr. Joseph Hanson and Mr. Thomas Long were a pair admirably suited to the concern, and to one another. Each possessed pre-eminently the various requisites and qualifications in which the other happened to be deficient. Tall, slender, elderly, with a fine bald head, a mild countenance, a most insinuating address, and a general air of faded gentility, Mr. Thomas Long was exactly the foreman to give respectability to his employer; whilst bold, fluent, rapid, loud, dashing in aspect and manner, with a great fund of animal spirits, and a prodigious stock of assurance and conceit, respectability was, to say the truth, the precise qualification which Mr. Joseph Hanson most needed.

Then the good town of Belford being divided, like most other country towns, into two prevailing factions, theological and political, the worthies whom I am attempting to describe prudently endeavoured to catch all parties by embracing different sides; Mr. Joseph Hanson being a tory and high-churchman of the very first water, who showed his loyalty according to the most approved fashion, by abusing his Majesty's ministers as revolutionary, thwarting the town-council, getting tipsy at conservative dinners, and riding twenty miles to attend an eminent preacher who wielded in a neighbouring county all the thunders of orthodoxy; whilst the soft-spoken Mr. Thomas Long was a Dissenter and a radical, who proved his allegiance to the house of Brunswick (for both claimed to be amongst the best wishers to the present dynasty and the reigning sovereign) by denouncing the government as weak and aristocratic, advocating the abolition of the peerage, getting up an operative reform club, and going to chapel three times every Sunday.

These measures succeeded so well, that the allotted six months (the general period of failure in that concern) elapsed, and still found Mr. Joseph Hanson as flourishing as ever in manner, and apparently flourishing in trade; they stood him, too, in no small stead, in a matter which promised to be still more conducive to his prosperity than buying and selling feminine gear,—in the grand matter (for Joseph jocosely professed to be a forlorn bachelor upon the look-out for a wife) of a wealthy marriage.

One of the most thrifty and thriving tradesmen in the town of Belford, was old John Parsons, the tinman. His spacious shop, crowded with its glittering and rattling commodities, pots, pans, kettles, meat-covers, in a word, the whole *patterie de cuisine*, was situate in the narrow, inconvenient lane called Oriel Street, which I have already done myself the honour of introducing to the courteous reader, standing betwixt a great chemist on one side, his windows filled with coloured jars, red, blue, and green, looking like painted glass, or like the fruit made of gems in Aladdin's garden, (I am as much taken myself with those jars in a chemist's window as ever was Miss Edgeworth's Rosamond,) and an eminent china warehouse on the other; our tinman having the honour to be next-door neighbour to no less a lady than Mrs. Philadelphia Tyler. Many a thriving tradesman might be found in Oriel Street, and many a blooming damsel amongst the tradesmen's daughters; but if the town gossip might be believed, the richest of all the rich shopkeepers was old John Parsons, and the prettiest girl (even without reference to her father's money-bags) was his fair daughter Harriet.

John Parsons was one of those loud, violent, blustering, boisterous personages who always put me in mind of the description so often appended to characters of that sort in the dramatis personæ of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, where one constantly meets with Ernulpho or Bertoldo, or some such Italianised appellation, "an old angry gentleman." The "old angry gentleman" of the fine old dramatists generally keeps the promise of the play-bills. He storms and rails during the whole five acts, scolding those the most whom he loves the best, making all around him uncomfortable, and yet meaning fully to do right, and firmly convinced that he is himself the injured party: and after quarrelling with cause or without to the end of the comedy, makes friends all round at the conclusion;—a sort of person whose good intentions everybody appreciates, but from whose violence everybody that can is sure to get away.

Now such men are just as common in the real work-a-day world as in the old drama; and precisely such a man was John Parsons.

His daughter was exactly the sort of creature that such training was calculated to produce; gentle, timid, shrinking, fond of her father, who indeed doted upon her, and would have sacrificed his whole substance, his right arm, his life, anything except his will or his humour, to give her a moment's pleasure; gratefully fond of her father, but yet more afraid than fond.

The youngest and only surviving child of a large family, and brought up without a mother's care, since Mrs. Parsons had died in her infancy, there was a delicacy and fragility, a slenderness of form and transparency of complexion, which, added to her gentleness and

modesty, gave an unexpected elegance to the tinman's daughter. A soft appealing voice, dove-like eyes, a smile rather sweet than gay, a constant desire to please, and a total unconsciousness of her own attractions, were amongst her chief characteristics. Some persons hold the theory that dissimilarity answers best in matrimony, and such persons would have found a most satisfactory contrast of appearance, mind, and manner, between the fair Harriet and her dashing suitor.

Besides this one great and distinguishing quality of assurance and vulgar pretension, which it is difficult to describe by any word short of impudence, Mr. Joseph Hanson was by no means calculated to please the eye of a damsel of seventeen, an age at which a man who owned to five-and-thirty, and who looked and most probably was at least ten years farther advanced on the journey of life, would not fail to be set down as a confirmed old bachelor. He had, too, a large mouth, full of irregular teeth, a head of hair which bore a great resemblance to a wig, and a suspicion of a squint (for it did not quite amount to that odious deformity), which added a most sinister expression to his countenance. Harriet Parsons could not abide him; and I verily believe she would have disliked him just as much, though a certain Frederick Mallet had never been in existence.

How her father, a dissenter, a radical, and a steady tradesman of the old school, who hated puffs and puffery, and finery and fashion, came to be taken in by a man opposed to him in religion and politics, in action and in speech, was a riddle that puzzled half the gossips in Belford. It happened through a mutual enmity, often, (to tell an unpalatable truth of poor human nature) a stronger bond of union than a mutual affection.

Thus it fell out.

Amongst the reforms carried into effect by the town-council, whereof John Parsons was a leading member, was the establishment of an efficient new police to replace the incapable old watchmen, who had hitherto been the sole guardians of life and property in our ancient borough. As far as the principle went, the liberal party were united and triumphant. They split, as liberals are apt to split, upon the rock of detail. It so happened that a turnpike, belonging to one of the roads leading into Belford, had been removed, by order of the commissioners, half a mile farther from the town;—half a mile indeed beyond the town boundary; and although there were only three houses, one a beer-shop, and the two others small tenements inhabited by labouring people, between the site of the old turnpike at the end of Prince's Street, and that of the new, at the King's Head Pond, our friend the tinman, who was nothing if not crotchety, insisted with so much pertinacity upon the perambulation of the blue-coated officials appointed for that beat, being extended along the highway for the distance aforesaid, that the whole council were set together by the ears, and the measure had very nearly gone by the board in consequence. The imminence of the peril saved them. The danger of reinstating the ancient Dogberrys of the watch, and still worse, of giving a triumph to the tories, brought the reformers to their senses—all except the man of tin, who, becoming only the more confirmed in his own opinion as ally after ally fell off from him, persisted in dividing the council six different times, and had the gratification of finding himself on each of the three last divisions, in a minority of one. He was about to bring forward the question upon a seventh occasion, when a hint as to the propriety in such case of moving a vote of censure against him for wasting the time of the board, caused him to secede from the council in a fury, and to quarrel with the whole municipal body, from the mayor downward.

Now the mayor, a respectable and intelligent attorney, heretofore John Parsons's most intimate friend, happened to have been brought publicly and privately into collision with Mr. Joseph Hanson, who, delighted to find an occasion on which he might at once indulge his aversion to the civic dignitary, and promote the interest of his love-suit, was not content with denouncing the corporation *de vive voix*, but wrote three grandiloquent letters to the Belford Courant, in which he demonstrated that the welfare of the borough, and the safety of the constitution, depended upon the police parading regularly, by day and by night, along the high road to the King's Head Pond, and that none but a pettifogging chief magistrate, and an incapable town-council, corrupt tools of a corrupt administration, could have had the gratuitous audacity to cause the policeman to turn at the top of Prince's Street, thereby leaving the persons and property of his majesty's liege subjects unprotected and uncared for. He enlarged upon the fact of the tenements in question being occupied by agricultural labourers, a class over whom, as he observed, the demagogues now in power delighted to tyrannize; and concluded his flourishing appeal to the conservatives of the borough, the county, and the empire at large, by a threat of getting up a petition against the council, and bringing the whole affair before the two Houses of Parliament.

Although this precious epistle was signed Amicus Patriæ, the writer was far too proud of his production to entrench himself behind the inglorious shield of a fictitious signature, and as the mayor, professionally indignant at the epithet pettifogging, threatened both the editor of the Belford Courant and Mr. Joseph Hanson with an action for libel, it followed, as matter of course, that John Parsons not only thought the haberdasher the most able and honest man in the borough, but regarded him

as the champion, if not the martyr, of his cause, and one who deserved everything that he had to bestow, even to the hand and portion of the pretty Harriet.

Affairs were in this posture, when one fine morning the chief magistrate of Belford entered the tinman's shop.

"Mr. Parsons," said the worthy dignitary, in a very conciliatory tone, "you may be as angry with me as you like, but I find from our good vicar that the fellow Hanson has applied to him for a license, and I cannot let you throw away my little friend Harriet without giving you warning, that a long and bitter repentance will follow such a union. There are emergencies in which it becomes a duty to throw aside professional niceties, and to sacrifice etiquette to the interests of an old friendship; and I tell you, as a prudent man, that I know of my own knowledge that this intended son-in-law of yours will be arrested before the wedding-day."

"I'll bail him," said John Parsons, stoutly.

"He is not worth a farthing," quoth the chief magistrate.

"I shall give him ten thousand pounds with my daughter," answered the man of pots and kettles.

"I doubt if ten thousand pounds will pay his just debts," rejoined the mayor.

"Then I'll give him twenty," responded the tinman.

"He has failed in five different places within the last five years," persisted the pertinacious adviser; "has run away from his creditors, Heaven knows how often; has taken the benefit of the Act time after time! You would not give your own sweet Harriet, the best and prettiest girl in the county, to an adventurer, the history of whose life is to be found in the Gazette and the Insolvent Court, and who is a high churchman and a tory to boot. Surely you would not fling away your daughter and your honest earnings upon a man of notorious bad character, with whom you have not an opinion or a prejudice in common? Just think what the other party will say!"

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Mallet or Mr. Mayor, if you prefer the sound of your new dignity," broke out John Parsons, in a fury, "I shall do what I like with my money and my daughter, without consulting you, or caring what anybody may chance to say, whether whig or tory. For my part, I think there's little to choose between them. One side's as bad as the other. Tyrants in office and patriots out. If Hanson is a conservative and a churchman, his foreman is a radical and a dissenter; and they neither of them pretend to dictate to their betters, which is more than I can say of some who call themselves reformers. Once for all, I tell you that he shall marry my Harriet, and that your nephew sha'n't: so now you may arrest him as soon as you like. I'm not to be managed here, however you and your tools may carry matters at the Town Hall. An Englishman's house is his castle."

"Well," said Mr. Mallet, "I am going. God knows I came out of old friendship towards yourself, and sincere affection for the dear girl your daughter. As to my nephew, besides that I firmly believe the young people like each other, I know him to be as steady a lad as ever drew a conveyance; and with what his father has left him, and what I can give him, to say nothing of his professional prospects, he would be a fit match for Harriet as far as money goes. But if you are determined—"

"I *am* determined," roared John Parsons. "Before next week is out, Joseph Hanson shall be my son-in-law. And now, sir, I advise you to go and drill your police." And the tinman retired from behind the counter into the interior of his dwelling, (for this colloquy had taken place in the shop,) banging the door behind him with a violence that really shook the house.

"Poor pretty Harriet!" thought the compassionate chief magistrate, "and poor Frederick too! The end of next week! This is only Monday; something may turn up in that time; we must make inquiries; I had feared that it would have been earlier. My old techy friend here is just the man to have arranged the marriage one day, and had the ceremony performed the next. We must look about us." And full of such cogitations, the mayor returned to his habitation.

On the Thursday week after this conversation a coach drew up, about eight o'clock in the morning, at the gate of St. Stephen's churchyard, and Mr. Joseph Hanson, in all the gloss of bridal finery, newly clad from top to toe, smiling and smirking at every instant, jumped down, followed by John Parsons, and prepared to hand out his reluctant bride elect, when Mr. Mallet, with a showy-looking middle-aged woman (a sort of feminine of Joseph himself) hanging upon his arm, accosted our friend the tinman.

"Stop!" cried the mayor.

"What for?" inquired John Parsons. "If it's a debt, I've already told you that I'll be his bail."

"It is a debt," responded the chief magistrate; "and one that luckily he must pay, and not you. Three years ago he married this lady at Liverpool. We have the certificate and all the documents."

"Yes, sir," added the injured fair one; "and I find that he has another wife in Dublin, and a third at Manchester. I have heard, too, that he ran away with a young lady to Scotland; but that don't count, as he was under age."

"Four wives!" ejaculated John Parsons, in a transport of astonishment and indignation. "Why the man is an absolute great Turk!

But the thing 's impossible. Come and answer for yourself, Joseph Hanson."

And the tinman turned to look for his intended son-in-law; but frightened at the sight of the fair claimant of his hand and person, the bridegroom had absconded, and John Parsons and the mayor had nothing for it but to rejoin the pretty Harriet, smiling through her tears as she sate with her bridemaiden in the coach at the churchyard-gate.

"Well; it 's a great escape! and we 're for ever obliged to you, Mr. Mayor. Don't cry any more, Harriet. If Frederick was but here, why, in spite of the policeman——but a week hence will do as well; and I am beginning to be of Harriet's mind, that even if he had not had three or four wives, we should be well off to be fairly rid of Mr. Joseph Hanson, the puffing haberdasher."

THE BEAUTY OF THE VILLAGE.

Three years ago, Hannah Colson was, beyond all manner of dispute, the prettiest girl in Aberleigh. It was a rare union of face, form, complexion, and expression. Of that just height, which, although certainly tall, would yet hardly be called so, her figure united to its youthful roundness, and still more youthful lightness, an airy flexibility, a bounding grace, and, when in repose, a gentle dignity, which alternately reminded one of a fawn bounding through the forest, or a swan at rest upon the lake. A sculptor would have modelled her for the youngest of the Graces; whilst a painter, caught by the bright colouring of that fair blooming face, the white forehead so vividly contrasted by the masses of dark curls, the jet-black eyebrows, and long rich eyelashes which shaded her finely-cut grey eye, and the pearly teeth disclosed by the scarlet lips, whose every movement was an unconscious smile, would doubtless have selected her for the very goddess of youth. Beyond all question, Hannah Colson, at eighteen, was the beauty of Aberleigh, and, unfortunately, no inhabitant of that populous village was more thoroughly aware that she was so than the fair damsel herself.

Her late father, good Master Colson, had been all his life a respectable and flourishing master bricklayer in the place. Many a man with less pretensions to the title would call himself a builder now-a-days, or, "by'r lady," an architect, and put forth a flaming card, vaunting his accomplishments in the mason's craft, his skill in plans and elevations, and his unparalleled dispatch and cheapness in carrying his designs into execution. But John Colson was no new-fangled personage. A plain honest tradesman was our bricklayer, and thoroughly of the old school; one who did his duty to his employers with punctual industry, who was never above his calling, a good son, a good brother, a good husband, and an excellent father, who trained up a large family in the way they should go, and never entered a public-house in his life.

The loss of this invaluable parent, about three years before, had been the only grief that Hannah Colson had known. But as her father, although loving her with the mixture of pride and fondness, which her remarkable beauty, her delightful gaiety, and the accident of her being by many years the youngest of his children, rendered natural, if not excusable, had yet been the only one about her, who had discernment to perceive, and authority to check her little ebullitions of vanity and self-will, she felt, as soon as the first natural tears were wiped away, that a restraint had been removed, and, scarcely knowing why, was too soon consoled for the greatest misfortune that could possibly have befallen one so dangerously gifted. Her mother was a kind, good, gentle woman, who having by necessity worked hard in the early part of her life, still continued the practice, partly from inclination, partly from a sense of duty, and partly from mere habit; and amongst her many excellent qualities had the Ailie Dinmont propensity of giving all her children their own way,* especially this the blooming cadette of the family: and her eldest brother, a bachelor,—who, succeeding to his father's business, took his place as master of the house, retaining his surviving parent as its mistress, and his pretty sister as something between a plaything and a pet; both in their several ways seemed vying with each other as to which should most thoroughly humour and indulge the lovely creature whom nature had already done her best or her worst to spoil to their hands.

Her other brothers and sisters, married and dispersed over the country, had of course no authority, even if they had wished to assume anything like power over the graceful and charming young woman whom every one belonging to her felt to be an object of pride and delight; so that their presents, and caresses, and smiling invitations, aided in strengthening Hannah's impression, poor girl though she were, that her little world, the small horizon of her own secluded hamlet, was made for her, and for her only; and if this persuasion had needed any additional confirmation, such confirmation would have been found in the universal admiration of the village beaux, and the envy, almost as general, of the village belles,—particularly in the

* "Eh, poor things, what else have I to give them?" This reply of Ailie Dinmont, and indeed her whole sweet character, short though it be, has always seemed to me the finest sketch in the Waverley Novels—finer even, because so much tenderer, than the bold and honest Jeannie Deans.

latter; the envy of rival beauties being, as everybody knows, of all flatteries the most piquant and seducing — in a word, the most genuine and real.

The only person from whom Hannah Colson ever heard that rare thing called truth, was her friend and school-fellow, Lucy Meadows, a young woman two or three years older than herself in actual age, and half a lifetime more advanced in the best fruits of mature age, in clearness of judgment, and steadiness of conduct.

A greater contrast of manner and character than that exhibited between the light-headed and light-hearted beauty, and her mild and quiet companion, could hardly be imagined. Lucy was pretty too, very pretty; but it was the calm, sedate, composed expression, the pure alabaster complexion, the soft dove-like eye, the general harmony and delicacy of feature and of form that we so often observe in a female *Friend;* and her low gentle voice, her retiring deportment, and Quaker-like simplicity of dress, were in perfect accordance with that impression. Her clearness of intellect, also, and rectitude of understanding, were such as are often found amongst that intelligent race of people; although there was an intuitive perception of character and motive, a fineness of observation under that demure and modest exterior, that, if Lucy had ever in her life been ten miles from her native village, might have been called knowledge of the world.

How she came by this quality, which some women seem to possess by instinct, Heaven only knows! Her early gravity of manner, and sedateness of mind, might be more easily accounted for. Poor Lucy was an orphan, and had from the age of fourteen been called upon to keep house for her only brother, a young man of seven or eight-and-twenty, well to do in the world, who, as the principal carpenter of Aberleigh, had had much intercourse with the Colsons in the way of business, and was on the most friendly terms with the whole family.

With one branch of that family, James Meadows would fain have been upon terms nearer and dearer than those of friendship. Even before John Colson's death, his love for Hannah, although not openly avowed, had been the object of remark to the whole village; and it is certain that the fond and anxious father found his last moments soothed by the hope that the happiness and prosperity of his favourite child were secured by the attachment of one so excellent in character and respectable in situation.

James Meadows was indeed a man to whom any father would have confided his dearest and loveliest daughter with untroubled confidence. He joined to the calm good sense and quiet observation that distinguished his sister, an inventive and constructive power, which, turned as it was to the purposes of his own trade, rendered him a most ingenious and dexterous mechanic; and which only needed the spur of emulation, or the still more active stimulus of personal ambition, to procure for him high distinction in any line to which his extraordinary faculty of invention and combination might be applied.

Ambition, however, he had none. He was happily quite free from that tormenting taskmaster, who, next perhaps to praise, makes the severest demand on human faculty and human labour. To maintain in the spot where he was born, the character for honesty, independence, and industry, that his father had borne before him; to support in credit and comfort the sister whom he loved so well, and one whom he loved still better, formed the safe and humble boundary of his wishes. But with the contrariety with which fortune so often seems to pursue those who do not follow her, his success far outstripped his moderate desires. The neighbouring gentlemen soon discovered his talent. Employment poured in upon him. His taste proved to be equal to his skill; and from the ornamental out-door work—the Swiss cottages, and fancy dairies, the treillage and the rustic seats belonging to a great country place, — to the most delicate mouldings of the boudoir and the saloon, nothing went well that wanted the guiding eye and finishing hand of James Meadows. The best workmen were proud to be employed by him; the most respectable yeomen offered their sons as his apprentices; and without any such design on his part, our village carpenter was in a fair way to become one of the wealthiest tradesmen in the county.

His personal character and peculiarly modest and respectful manners, contributed not a little to his popularity with his superiors. He was a fair, slender young man, with a pale complexion, a composed, but expressive, countenance, a thoughtful, deep-set, grey eye, and a remarkably fine head, with a profusion of curling brown hair, which gave a distinguished air to his whole appearance; so that he was constantly taken by strangers for a gentleman; and the gentle propriety with which he was accustomed to correct the mistake, was such as seldom failed to heighten the estimation of the individual, whilst it set them right as to his station. Hannah Colson, with all her youthful charms, might think herself a lucky damsel in securing the affections of such a lover as this; and that she did actually think so was the persuasion of those who knew her best—of her mother, of her brother William, and of Lucy Meadows; although the coy, fantastic beauty, shy as a ring-dove, wild as a fawn of the forest, was so far from confessing any return of affection, that, whilst suffering his attentions, and accepting his escort to the rural gaieties which beseemed her age, she would now profess, even while hang-

ing on his arm, her intention of never marrying, and now coquet before his eyes with some passing admirer whom she had never seen before. She took good care, however, not to go too far in her coquetry, or to flirt twice with the same person; and so contrived to temper her resolutions against matrimony with "nods and becks and wreathed smiles," that, modest as he was by nature, and that natural modesty enhanced by the diffidence which belongs to a deep and ardent passion, James Meadows himself saw no real cause for fear in the pretty petulance of his fair mistress, in a love of power so full of playful grace, that it seemed rather a charm than a fault, and in a blushing reluctance to change her maiden state, and lose her maiden freedom, which had, in his eyes, all the attractions of youthful shamefacedness. That she would eventually be his own dear wife, James entertained no manner of doubt; and, pleased with all that pleased her, was not unwilling to prolong the happy days of courtship.

In this humour Lucy had left him, when, towards the end of May, she had gone for the first time to spend a few weeks with some relations in London. Her cousins were kind and wealthy; and, much pleased with the modest intelligence of their young kinswoman, they exerted themselves to render their house agreeable to her, and to show her the innumerable sights of the Queen of Cities. So that her stay, being urged by James, who, thoroughly unselfish, rejoiced to find his sister so well amused, was prolonged to the end of July, when, alarmed at the total cessation of letters from Hannah, and at the constrained and dispirited tone which she discovered, or fancied that she discovered, in her brother's, Lucy resolved to hasten home.

He received her with his usual gentle kindness and his sweet and thoughtful smile; assured her that he was well; exerted himself more than usual to talk, and waived away her anxious questions by extorting from her an account of her journey, and her residence, of all that she had seen, and of her own feelings on returning to her country home after so long a sojourn in the splendid and beautiful metropolis. He talked more than was usual with him; and more gaily; but still Lucy was dissatisfied. The hand that had pressed her's on alighting was cold as death; the lip that had kissed her fair brow was pale and trembling; his appetite was gone; and his frequent and apparently unconscious habit of pushing away the clustering curls from his forehead, proved, as plainly as words could have done, that there was pain in the throbbing temples. The pulsation was even visible; but still he denied that he was ill, and declared that her notion of his having grown thin and pale was nothing but a woman's fancy,—the fond whim of a fond sister.

To escape from the subject he took her into the garden,—her own pretty flower-garden, divided by a wall covered with creepers from the larger plot of ground devoted to vegetables, and bounded on one side by buildings connected with his trade, and parted on the other from a well-stored timber-yard, by a beautiful rustic screen of fir and oak and birch, with the bark on, which, terminating in a graceful curve at the end next the house, and at that leading to the garden in a projecting gothic porch,—partly covered by climbing plants, partly broken by tall pyramidical hollyhocks, and magnificent dahlias, and backed by a clump of tall elms, formed a most graceful veil to an unsightly object. This screen had been erected during Lucy's absence, and without her knowledge; and her brother, smiling at the delight which she expressed, pointed out to her the splendid beauty of her flowers, and the luxuriant profusion of their growth.

The old buildings matted with roses, honeysuckles, and jessamines, broken only by the pretty out-door room which Lucy called her green-house; the pile of variously-tinted geraniums in front of that prettiest room; the wall garlanded, covered, hidden with interwoven myrtles, fuchsias, passion-flowers, clematis, and the silky blossoms of the grandiflora pea; the beds filled with dahlias, salvias, calceolarias, and carnations of every hue, with the rich purple and the pure white petunia, with the many-coloured marvel of Peru, with the enamelled blue of the Siberian larkspur, with the richly-scented changeable lupine, with the glowing lavatera, the dark-eyed hybiscus, the pure and alabaster cup of the white œnothera, the lilac clusters of the phlox, and the delicate blossom of the yellow sultan, most elegant amongst flowers;—all these, with a hundred other plants too long to name, and all their various greens, and the pet weed mignionette growing like grass in a meadow, and mingling its aromatic odour amongst the general fragrance—all this sweetness and beauty glowing in the evening sun, and breathing of freshness and of cool air, came with such a thrill of delight upon the poor village maiden; who, in spite of her admiration of London, had languished in its heat and noise and dirt, for the calm and quiet, the green leaves and the bright flowers of her country home, that, from the very fulness of her heart, from joy and gratitude and tenderness and anxiety, she flung her arms round her brother's neck, and burst into tears.

Lucy was usually so calm and self-commanded, that such an ebullition of feeling from her astonished and affected James Meadows more than any words, however tender. He pressed her to his heart, and when, following up the train of her own thoughts,—sure that this kind brother, who had done so much to please her, was himself unhappy, guessing, and longing, and yet fearing to know the cause,—when Lucy, agitated by

such feelings, ventured to whisper "Hannah?" her brother placing her gently on the steps leading to the green-house, and leaning himself against the open door, began in a low and subdued tone to pour out his whole heart to his sympathising auditress. The story was nearly such as she had been led to expect from the silence of one party, and the distress of the other. A rival—a most unworthy rival—had appeared upon the scene; and James Meadows, besides the fear of losing the lovely creature whom he had loved so fondly, had the additional grief of believing that the man whose flatteries had at least gained from her a flattering hearing, was of all others the least likely to make her respectable and happy.—Much misery may be comprised in few words. Poor James's story was soon told.

A young and gay Baronet had, as Lucy knew, taken the manor-house and manor of Aberleigh: and during her absence, a part of his retinue with a train of dogs and horses had established themselves in the mansion, in preparation for their master's arrival. Amongst these new comers, by far the most showy and important was the head-keeper, Edward Forester, a fine-looking young man, with a tall, firm, upright figure, a clear dark complexion, bright black eyes, a smile alternately winning and scornful, and a prodigious fluency of speech, and readiness of compliment. He fell in love with Hannah at first sight, and declared his passion the same afternoon; and, although discouraged by every one about her, never failed to parade before her mother's house two or three times a-day, mounted on his master's superb blood-horse, to waylay her in her walks, and to come across her in her visits. Go where she might, Hannah was sure to encounter Edward Forester; and this devotion from one whose personal attractions extorted as much admiration from the lasses, her companions, as she herself had been used to excite amongst the country lads, had in it, in spite of its ostentatious openness, a flattery that seemed irresistible.

"I do not think she loves him, Lucy," said James Meadows, sighingly; "indeed I am sure that she does not. She is dazzled by his showiness and his fluency, his horsemanship and his dancing; but love him she does not. It is fascination, such a fascination as leads a moth to flutter round a candle, or a bird to drop into the rattlesnake's mouth,—and never was flame more dangerous, or serpent more deadly. He is unworthy of her, Lucy,—thoroughly unworthy. This man, who calls himself devoted to a creature as innocent as she is lovely,—who pretends to feel a pure and genuine passion for this pure and too-believing girl, passes his evenings, his nights, in drinking, in gambling, in debauchery of the lowest and most degrading nature. He is doubtless at this very instant at the wretched beer-shop at the corner of the common—the haunt of all that is wicked, and corrupter of all that is frail, 'The Foaming Tankard.' It is there, in the noble game of Four-Corners, that the man who aspires to the love of Hannah Colson passes his hours.—Lucy, do you remember the exquisite story of Phœbe Dawson, in Crabbe's Parish Register?—such as she was, will Hannah be. I could resign her, Heaven knows, grievous as the loss would be, to one whom she loved, and who would ensure her happiness. But to give her up to Edward Forester—the very thought is madness!"

"Surely, brother, she cannot know that he is so unworthy! surely, surely, when she is convinced that he is so, she will throw him off like an infected garment! I know Hannah well. She would be protected from such an one as you describe, as well by pride as by purity. She cannot be aware of these propensities."

"She has been told of them repeatedly; but he denies the accusation, and she rather believes his denial than the assertion of her best friends. Knowing Hannah as you do, Lucy, you cannot but remember the petulant self-will, the scorn of contradiction and opposition, which used half to vex and half to amuse us in the charming spoilt child. We little dreamt how dangerous that fault, almost diverting in trifles, might become in the serious business of life. Her mother and brother are my warm advocates, and the determined opponents of my rival; and therefore, to assert what she calls her independence and her disinterestedness, (for with this sweet perverse creature the worldly prosperity which I valued chiefly for her sake makes against me,) she will fling herself away on one wholly unworthy of her, one whom she does not even love, and with whom her whole life will be a scene of degradation and misery."

"Will he be to-night at the Foaming Tankard?"

"He is there every night."

At this point of their conversation the brother was called away; and Lucy, after a little consideration, tied on her bonnet, and walked to Mrs. Colson's.

Her welcome from William Colson and his mother was as cordial and hearty as ever, perhaps more so; Hannah's greetings were affectionate, but constrained. Not to receive Lucy kindly was impossible; and yet her own internal consciousness rendered poor Lucy, next perhaps to her brother, the very last person whom she would have desired to see; and this uncomfortable feeling increased to a painful degree, when the fond sister, with some diminution of her customary gentleness, spoke to her openly of her conduct to James, and repeated with strong and earnest reprehension, all that she had heard of the conduct and pursuits of her new admirer.

"He frequent the Foaming Tankard! He drink to intoxication! He play for days and

nights at Four-Corners! It is a vile slander! I would answer for it with my life! He told me this very day that he has never even entered that den of infamy."

"I believe him to be there at this very hour," replied Lucy, calmly. And Hannah, excited to the highest point of anger and agitation, dared Lucy to the instant proof, invited her to go with her at once to the beer-house, and offered to abandon all thoughts of Edward Forester if he proved to be there. Lucy, willing enough to place the fate of the cause on that issue, prepared to accompany her; and the two girls were so engrossed by the importance of their errand, that they did not even hear Mrs. Colson's terrified remonstrance, who vainly endeavoured to detain or recall them by assurances that small-pox of the confluent sort was in the house; and that she had heard only that very afternoon, that a young woman, vaccinated at the same time, and by the same person with her Hannah, lay dead in one of the rooms of the Foaming Tankard.

Not listening to, not even hearing her mother, Hannah walked with the desperate speed of passion through the village street, up the winding hill, across the common, along the avenue; and reached in less time than seemed possible the open grove of oaks, in one corner of which this obnoxious beer-house, the torment and puzzle of the magistrates, and the pest of the parish, was situated. There was no sign of death or sickness about the place. The lights from the tap-room and the garden, along one side of which the alley for Four-Corners was erected, gleamed in the darkness of a moonless summer night between the trees; and even farther than the streaming light, pierced the loud oaths and louder laughter, the shouts of triumph, and the yells of defeat, mixed with the dull heavy blows of the large wooden bowl, from the drunken gamesters in the alley.

Hannah started as she heard one voice; but, determined to proceed, she passed straight through the garden-gate, and rushed hastily on to the open shed where the players were assembled. There, stripped of his coat and waistcoat, in all the agony of an intoxicated gambler, stood Edward Forester, in the act of staking his gold-laced hat upon the next cast. He threw and lost; and casting from him with a furious oath the massive wooden ball, struck, in his blind frenzy, the lovely creature transfixed in silent horror at the side of the alley, who fell with the blow, and was carried for dead into the Foaming Tankard.

Hannah did not, however, die; although her left arm was broken, her shoulder dislocated, and much injury inflicted by the fall. She lived, and she still lives, but no longer as the Beauty of the Village. Her fine shape injured by the blow, and her fair face difigured by the small-pox, she can no longer boast the surpassing loveliness which obtained for her the title of the Rose of Aberleigh. And yet she has gained more than she has lost, even in mere attraction; the vain coquettish girl is become a sweet and gentle woman; gaiety has been replaced by sensibility, and the sauciness of conscious power, by the modest wish to please. In her long and dangerous illness, her slow and doubtful convalescence, Hannah learned the difficult lesson to acknowledge and to amend her own faults; and when, after many scruples on the score of her changed person and impaired health, she became the happy wife of James Meadows, she brought to him, in a corrected temper and purified heart, a dowry far more precious in his mind than the transient beauty which had been her only charm in the eyes of Edward Forester.

TOWN VERSUS COUNTRY.

"I'm desperately afear'd, Sue, that that brother of thine will turn out a jackanapes," was the apostrophe of the good yeoman Michael Howe, to his pretty daughter Susan, as they were walking one fine afternoon in harvest through some narrow and richly-wooded lanes, which wound between the crofts of his farm of Rutherford West, situate in that out-of-the-way part of Berkshire, which is emphatically called "the Low Country," for no better reason that I can discover than that it is the very hilliest part of the royal county. "I'm sadly afear'd, Sue, that he'll turn out a jackanapes!"—and the stout farmer brandished the tall paddle which served him at once as a walking-stick and a weeding-hook, and began vigorously eradicating the huge thistles which grew by the roadside, as a mere vent for his vexation. "You'll see that he'll come back an arrant puppy," quoth Michael Howe.

"Oh, father! don't say so," rejoined Susan; "why should you think so hardly of poor William — our own dear William, whom we have not seen these three years? What earthly harm has he done?"

"Harm, girl! Look at his letters! You know you're ashamed yourself to take 'em of the postman. Pink paper, forsooth, and blue ink, and a seal with bits of make-believe gold speckled about in it like a ladybird's wings—I hate all make-believes, all shams; they're worse than poison;—stinking of some outlandish scent, so that I'm forced to smoke a couple of pipes extra to get rid of the smell; and latterly, as if this folly was not enough, he has crammed these precious scrawls into a sort of paper-bag, pasted together just as if o' purpose to make us pay double postage. Jackanapes did I call him? He's a worse mollycot than a woman."

"Dear father, all young men will be foolish one way or another; and you know my uncle says, that William is wonderfully steady for so young a man, and his master is so well pleased with him, that he is now foreman in his great concern. You must parden a little nonsense in a country youth, thrown suddenly into a shop in the gayest part of London, and with his godfather's legacy coming unexpectedly upon him, making him too rich for a journeyman tradesman. But he's coming to see us now. He would have come six months ago, as soon as he got this money, if his master could have spared him; and he'll be wiser before he goes back to London."

"Not he. Hang Lunnon! Why did he go to Lunnon at all? Why could not he stop at Rutherford like his father and his father's father, and see to the farm? What business had he in a great shop?—a man-mercer's they call it. What call had he to Lunnon, I say? Tell me that, Miss Susan."

"Why, dear father, you know very well that when Master George Arnot was so unluckily obstinate about the affair of the watercourse, and would go to law with you, and swore that instead of marrying William, poor Mary should be married to the rich maltster old Jacob Giles—William, who had loved Mary ever since they were children together, could not bear to stay in the country, and went off to my uncle, forbidding me ever to mention her name in a letter; and so——"

"Well! well!" rejoined the father, somewhat softened; "but he need not have turned puppy and coxcomb because he was crossed in love. Pshaw!" added the good farmer, giving a mighty tug with his paddle at a tough mullein which happened to stand in his way; "I was crossed in love myself, in my young days, but I did not run off and turn tailor. I made up plump to another wench—your poor mother, Susan, that's dead and gone—and carried her off like a man; married her in a month, girl; and that's what Will should have done. I'm afear'd we shall find him a sad jackanapes. Jem Hathaway, the gauger, told me last market-day that he saw him one Sunday in the what-d'ye-call't—the Park there, covered with rings, and gold chains, and fine velvets—all green and gold, like our great peacock. Well! we shall soon see. He comes to-night, you say? 'T is not above six o'clock by the sun, and the Wantage coach don't come in till seven. Even if they lend him a horse and cart at the Nag's Head, he can't be here these two hours. So I shall just see the ten-acre field cleared, and be home time enough to shake him by the hand if he comes like a man, or to kick him out of doors if he looks like a dandy." And off strode the stout yeoman in his clouted shoes, his leather gaiters, and smock frock, and a beard (it was Friday) of six days' growth; looking altogether prodigiously like a man who would keep his word.

Susan, on her part, continued to thread the narrow winding lanes that led towards Wantage; walking leisurely along, and forming, as she went, half unconsciously, a nosegay of the wild-flowers of the season; the delicate hare-bell, the lingering wood-vetch, the blue scabious, the heaths which clustered on the bank, the tall graceful lilac campanula, the snowy bells of the bindweed, the latest briar-rose, and that species of clematis, which, perhaps because it generally indicates the neighbourhood of houses, has won for itself the pretty name of the traveller's joy, whilst that loveliest of wild-flowers, whose name is now sentimentalized out of prettiness, the intensely blue forget-me-not, was there in rich profusion.

Susan herself was not unlike her posy; sweet and delicate, and full of a certain pastoral grace. Her light and airy figure suited well with a fair mild countenance, breaking into blushes and smiles when she spoke, and set off by bright ringlets of golden hair, parted on her white forehead, and hanging in long curls on her finely-rounded cheeks. Always neat but never fine,—gentle, cheerful, and modest, it would be difficult to find a prettier specimen of an English farmer's daughter than Susan Howe. But just now the little damsel wore a look of care not usual to her fair and tranquil features; she seemed, as she was, full of trouble.

"Poor William!" so ran her thoughts, "my father would not even listen to his last letter because it poisoned him with musk. I wonder that William can like that disagreeable smell! and he expects him to come down on the top of the coach, instead of which, he says that he means to purchase a—a— (even in her thoughts poor Susan could not master the word, and was obliged to have recourse to the musk-scented billet) britschka—ay, that's it! or a droschky; I wonder what sort of things they are—and that he only visits us *en passant* in a tour, for which, town being so empty, and business slack, his employer has given him leave, and in which he is to be accompanied by his friend Monsieur Victor—Victor—I can't make out his other name—an eminent perfumer who lives next door. To think of bringing a Frenchman here, remembering how my father hates the whole nation! Oh dear, dear! And yet I know William. I know why he went, and I do believe, in spite of a little finery and foolishness, and of all the britschkas, and droschkies, and Victors, into the bargain, that he 'll be glad to get home again. No place like home! Even in these silly notes, that feeling is always at the bottom. Did not I hear a carriage before me? Yes!—no!—I can't tell. One takes everything for the sound of wheels when one is expecting a dear friend! And if we can but

get him to look as he used to look, and to be what he used to be, he won't leave us again for all the fine shops in Regent Street, or all the britschkas and droschkies in Christendom. My father is getting old now, and William ought to stay at home," thought the affectionate sister; "and I firmly believe that what he ought to do, he will do. Besides which—surely there *is* a carriage now."

Just as Susan arrived at this point of her cogitations, that sound which had haunted her imagination all the afternoon, the sound of wheels rapidly advancing, became more and more audible, and was suddenly succeeded by a tremendous crash, mixed with men's voices — one of them her brother's—venting in two languages (for Monsieur Victor, whatever might be his proficiency in English, had recourse in this emergency to his native tongue) the different ejaculations of anger and astonishment which are pretty sure to accompany an overset; and on turning a corner of the lane, Susan caught her first sight of the britschka or droschky, whichever it might be, that had so much puzzled her simple apprehension, in the shape of a heavy-looking open carriage garnished with head and apron, lying prostrate against a gate-post, of which the wheels had fallen foul. Her brother was fully occupied in disengaging the horses from the traces, in reprimanding his companion for his bad driving, which he declared had occasioned the accident, and in directing him to go for assistance to a cottage half a mile back on the road to Wantage, whilst he himself intimated his intention of proceeding for more help to the Farm; and the obedient Frenchman — who, notwithstanding the derangement which his coiffure might naturally be expected to have experienced in his tumble, looked, Susan thought, as if his hair were put in paper every night and pomatumed every morning, and as if his whole dapper person were saturated with his own finest essences, a sort of travelling perfumer's shop, a peripatetic pouncet-box — walked off in the direction indicated, with an air of habitual submission, which showed pretty plainly that, whether as proprietor of the unlucky britschka, or from his own force of character, William was considered as the principal director of the present expedition.

Having sent his comrade off, William Howe, leaving his steeds quietly browsing by the way-side, bent his steps towards home. Susan advanced rapidly to meet him; and in a few seconds the brother and sister were in each other's arms; and, after most affectionate greetings, they sat down by mutual consent upon a piece of felled timber which lay upon the bank—the lane on one side being bounded by an old coppice—and began to ask each other the thousand questions so interesting to the children of one house who have been long parted.

Seldom surely has the rough and rugged bark of an unhewed elm had the honour of supporting so perfect an exquisite. Jem Hathaway, the exciseman, had in nothing exaggerated the magnificence of our young Londoner. From shoes which looked as if they had come from Paris in the ambassador's bag, to the curled head and the whiskered and mustachioed countenance, (for the hat which should have been the crown of the finery was wanting—probably in consequence of the recent overturn,) from top to toe he looked fit for a ball at Almack's, or a fête at Bridgewater House; and, oh! how unsuited to the old-fashioned homestead at Rutherford West! His lower appointments, hose and trousers, were of the finest woven silk; his coat was claret colour, of the latest cut; his waistcoat — talk of the great peacock! *he* would have seemed dingy and dusky beside such a splendour of colour! — his waistcoat literally dazzled poor Susan's eyes; and his rings, and chains, and studs, and brooches, seemed to the wondering girl almost sufficient to stock a jeweller's shop.

In spite of all this nonsense, it was clear to her, from every look and word, that she was not mistaken in believing William unchanged in mind and disposition, and that there was a warm and a kind heart beating under the finery. Moreover, she felt that if the unseemly magnificence could once be thrown aside, the whiskers and mustachios cleared away, and his fine manly person reinstated in the rustic costume in which she had been accustomed to see him, her brother would *then* appear greatly improved in face and figure,—taller, more vigorous, and with an expression of intelligence and frankness delightful to behold. But how to get quit of the finery, and the Frenchman, and the britschka? Or how reconcile her father to iniquities so far surpassing even the smell of musk?

William, on his part, regarded his sister with unqualified admiration. He had left a laughing blooming girl, he found a delicate and lovely young woman, all the more lovely for the tears that mingled with her smiles, true tokens of a most pure affection.

"And you really are glad to see me, Susy? And my father is well? And here is the old place, looking just as it used to do; house, and ricks, and barn-yard, not quite in sight, but one feels that one shall see them at the next turning—the great coppice right opposite, looking thicker and greener than ever! how often we have gone nutting in that coppice!—the tall holly at the gate, with the woodbine climbing up, and twisting its sweet garlands round the very topmost spray like a coronet; —many a time and often have I climbed the holly to twine the flaunting wreath round your straw-bonnet, Miss Susy! And here, on the other side of the hedge, is the very field where Hector and Harebell ran their famous

course, and gave their hare fifty turns before they killed her, without ever letting her get out of the stubble. These were pleasant days, Susy, after all!"

"Happy days, dear William!"

"And we shall go nutting again, shall we not?"

"Surely, dear brother! Only"—— And Susan suddenly stopped.

"Only what, Miss Susy?"

"Only I don't see how you can possibly go into the copse in this dress. Think how the brambles would prick and tear, and how that chain would catch in the hazel stems! and as to climbing the holly-tree in that fine tight coat, or beating the stubbles for a hare in those delicate thin shoes, why the thing is out of the question. And I really don't believe," continued Susan, finding it easier to go on than to begin, "I really don't believe that either Hector or Harebell would know you, if they saw you so decked out."

William laughed outright.

"I don't mean to go coursing in these shoes, I assure you, Susy. This is an evening dress. I have a shooting-jacket and all thereunto belonging in the britschka, which will not puzzle either Harebell or Hector, because it's just what they have been used to see me wear."

"Put it on, then, I beseech you!" exclaimed Susy; "put it on directly!"

"Why, I am not going coursing this evening."

"No—but my father!—Oh, dear William! if you did but know how he hates finery, and foreigners, and britschkas! Oh, dear William, send off the French gentleman and the outlandish carriage—run into the coppice and put on the shooting-dress!"

"Oh, Susan!" began William; but Susan having once summoned up courage sufficient to put her remonstrances into words, followed up the attack with an earnestness that did not admit a moment's interruption.

"My father hates finery even more than Harebell or Hector would do. You know his country notions, dear William; and I think that latterly he has hated everything that looks Londonish and new-fangled worse than ever. We are old-fashioned people at Rutherford. There's your pretty old friend, Mary Arnott, can't abide gewgaws any more than my father."

"Mary Arnott! You mean Mrs. Giles. What do I care for her likes and dislikes?" exclaimed William, haughtily.

"I mean Mary Arnott, and not Mrs. Giles. and you do care for her likes and dislikes a great deal," replied his sister, with some archness. "Poor Mary, when the week before that fixed for the wedding arrived, felt that she *could* not marry Master Jacob Giles; so she found an opportunity of speaking to him alone, and told him the truth. I even believe, although I have no warrant for saying so, that she confessed she could not love him because she loved another. Master Giles behaved like a wise man, and told her father it would be very wrong to force her inclinations. He behaved kindly as well as wisely, for he endeavoured to reconcile all parties, and put matters in train for the wedding that had hindered his. This at that time Master Arnott would not hear of, and therefore we did not tell you that the marriage which you took for granted had gone off. Till about three months ago, that odious lawsuit was in full action, and Master Arnott as violently set against my father as ever. Then, however, he was taken ill, and, upon his deathbed, he sent for his old friend, begged his pardon, and appointed him guardian to Mary. And there she is at home—for she would not come to meet you—but there she is, hoping to find you just what you were when you went away, and hating Frenchmen, and britschkas, and finery, and the smell of musk, just as if she were my father's daughter in good earnest. And, now, dear William, I know what has been passing in your mind quite as well as if hearts were peep-shows, and one could see to the bottom of them at the rate of a penny a look. I know that you went away for love of Mary, and flung yourself into the finery of London to try to get rid of the thought of her, and came down with all this nonsense of britschkas, and whiskers, and waistcoats, and rings, just to show her what a beau she had lost in losing you—Did not you, now? Well! don't stand squeezing my hand, but go and meet your French friend, who has got a man, I see, to help to pick up the fallen equipage. Go and get rid of him," quoth Susan.

"How can I?" exclaimed William, in laughing perplexity.

"Give him the britschka!" responded his sister, "and send them off together as fast as may be. That will be a magnificent farewell. And then take your portmanteau into the copse, and change all this trumpery for the shooting-jacket and its belongings; and then come back and let me trim these whiskers as closely as scissors can trim them, and then we'll go to the farm, to gladden the hearts of Harebell, Hector, my dear father, and—somebody else; and it will not be that somebody's fault if ever you go to London again, or get into a britschka, or put on a chain, or a ring, or write with blue ink upon pink paper, as long as you live. Now go and dismiss the Frenchman," added Susan, laughing, "and we'll walk home together the happiest brother and sister in Christendom."

THE WIDOW'S DOG.

One of the most beautiful spots in the north of Hampshire—a part of the country which, from its winding green lanes, with the trees meeting overhead like a cradle, its winding roads between coppices, with wide turfy margents on either side, as if left on purpose for the picturesque and frequent gipsy camp, its abundance of hedge-row timber, and its extensive tracts of woodland, seems as if the fields were just dug out of the forest, as might have happened in the days of William Rufus—one of the loveliest scenes in this lovely county is the Great Pond at Ashley End.

Ashley End is itself a romantic and beautiful village, straggling down a steep hill to a clear and narrow running stream, which crosses the road in the bottom, crossed in its turn by a picturesque wooden bridge, and then winding with equal abruptness up the opposite acclivity, so that the scattered cottages, separated from each other by long strips of garden ground, the little country inn, and two or three old-fashioned tenements of somewhat higher pretensions, surrounded by their own moss-grown orchards, seemed to be completely shut out from this bustling world, buried in the sloping meadows so deeply green, and the hanging woods so rich in their various tinting, along which the slender wreaths of smoke from the old clustered chimneys went smiling peacefully in the pleasant autumn air. So profound was the tranquillity, that the slender streamlet which gushed along the valley, following its natural windings, and glittering in the noonday sun like a thread of silver, seemed to the unfrequent visiters of that remote hamlet the only trace of life and motion in the picture.

The source of this pretty brook was undoubtedly the Great Pond, although there was no other road to it than by climbing the steep hill beyond the village, and then turning suddenly to the right, and descending by a deep cart-track, which led between wild banks covered with heath and feathery broom, garlanded with bramble and briar roses, and gay with the purple heath-flower and the delicate harebell,* to a scene even more beautiful and more solitary than the hamlet itself.

It was a small clear lake almost embosomed in trees, across which an embankment, formed for the purpose of a decoy for the wildfowl with which it abounded, led into a wood which covered the opposite hill; an old forest-like wood, where the noble oaks, whose boughs almost dipped into the water, were surrounded by their sylvan accompaniments of birch, and holly, and hawthorn, where the tall trees met over the straggling paths, and waved across the grassy dells and turfy brakes with which it was interspersed. One low-browed cottage stood in a little meadow—it might almost be called a little orchard—just at the bottom of the winding road that led to the Great Pond: the cottage of the widow King.

Independently of its beautiful situation, there was much that was at once picturesque and comfortable about the cottage itself, with its irregularity of outline, its gable-ends and jutting-out chimneys, its thatched roof and pent-house windows. A little yard, with a small building which just held an old donkey-chaise and an old donkey, a still older cow, and a few pens for geese and chickens, lay on one side of the house; in front, a flower court, surrounded by a mossy paling; a larger plot for vegetables behind; and, stretching down to the Great Pond on the side opposite the yard, was the greenest of all possible meadows, which, as I have before said, two noble walnut and mulberry trees, and a few aged pears and apples, clustered near the dwelling, almost converted into that pleasantest appanage of country life, an orchard.

Notwithstanding, however, the exceeding neatness of the flower-court, and the little garden filled with beds of strawberries, and lavender, and old-fashioned flowers, stocks, carnations, roses, pinks; and in spite of the cot-

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* One of the pleasantest moments that I have ever known, was that of the introduction of an accomplished young American to the common harebell, upon the very spot which I have attempted to describe. He had never seen that English wild-flower, consecrated by the poetry of our common language, was struck even more than I expected by its delicate beauty, placed it in his button-hole, and repeated with enthusiasm the charming lines of Scott, from the Lady of the Lake:—

> "For me,"—she stooped, and, looking round,
> Plucked a blue harebell from the ground,—
> "For me, whose memory scarce conveys
> An image of more splendid days,
> This little flower, that loves the lea,
> May well my simple emblem be;
> It drinks heaven's dew as blithe as rose
> That in the King's own garden grows,
> And when I place it in my hair,
> Allan, a bard, is bound to swear
> He ne'er saw coronet so fair."

Still greater was the delight with which another American recognised that blossom of a thousand associations—the flower sacred to Milton and Shakspeare—the English primrose. He bent his knee to the ground in gathering a bunch, with a reverential expression which I shall not easily forget, as if the flower were to him an embodiment of the great poets by whom it has been consecrated to fame; and he also had the good taste not to be ashamed of his own enthusiasm. I have had the pleasure of exporting, this spring, to my friend Miss Sedgwick, (to whose family one of my visiters belongs,) roots and seeds of these wild flowers, of the common violet, the cowslip, and the ivy, another of our indigenous plants which our Transatlantic brethren want, and with which Mr. Theodore Sedgwick was especially delighted. It will be a real distinction to be the introductress of these plants into that *Berkshire* village of New England, where Miss Sedgwick, surrounded by relatives worthy of her in talent and in character, passes her summers.

tage itself being not only always covered with climbing shrubs, woodbine, jessamine, clematis, and musk-roses, and in one southern nook a magnificent tree-like fuchsia, but the old chimney, actually garlanded with delicate creepers, the maurandia, and the lotus spermus, whose pink and purple bells, peeping out from between their elegant foliage, and mingling with the bolder blossoms and darker leaves of the passion-flower, give such a wreathy and airy grace to the humblest building;* in spite of this luxuriance of natural beauty, and of the evident care bestowed upon the cultivation of the beds, and the training of the climbing plants, we yet felt, we could hardly tell why, but yet we instinctively felt, that the moss-grown thatch, the mouldering paling, the hoary apple-trees, in a word, the evidences of decay visible around the place, were but types of the fading fortunes of the inmates.

And such was really the case. The widow King had known better days. Her husband had been the head keeper, her only son head gardener, of the lord of the manor; but both were dead; and she, with an orphan grandchild, a thoughtful boy of eight or nine years old, now gained a scanty subsistence from the produce of their little dairy, their few poultry, their honey, (have I not said that a row of bee-hives held their station on the sunny side of the garden?) and the fruit and flowers which little Tom and the old donkey carried in their season to Belford every market-day.

Besides these, their accustomed sources of income, Mrs. King and Tom neglected no means of earning an honest penny. They stripped the downy spikes of the bulrushes to stuff cushions and pillows, and wove the rushes themselves into mats. Poor Tom was as handy as a girl; and in the long winter evenings he would plait the straw hats in which he went to Belford market, and knit the stockings, which, kept rather for show than for use, were just assumed to go to church on Sundays, and then laid aside for the week. So exact was their economy.

*I know nothing so pretty as the manner in which creeping plants interwreath themselves one with another. We have at this moment a wall quite covered with honeysuckles, fuchsias, roses, clematis, passion-flowers, myrtles, scobæa, acrima carpis, lotus spermus, and maurandia Barclayana, in which two long sprays of the last-mentioned climbers have jutted out from the wall, and entwined themselves together like the handle of an antique basket. The rich profusion of leaves, those of the lotus spermus, comparatively rounded and dim, soft in texture and colour, with a darker patch in the middle, like the leaf of the old gum geranium; those of the maurandia, so bright, and shining, and sharply outlined — the stalks equally graceful in their varied green, and the roseate bells of the one contrasting and harmonizing so finely with the rich violet flowers of the other, might really form a study for a painter. I never saw anything more graceful in quaint and cunning art than this bit of simple nature. But nature often takes a fancy to outvie her skilful and ambitious handmaiden, and is always certain to succeed in the competition.

The only extravagance in which Mrs. King indulged herself was keeping a pet spaniel, the descendant of a breed for which her husband had been famous, and which was so great a favourite, that it ranked next to Tom in her affections, and next to his grandmother in Tom's. The first time that I ever saw them, this pretty dog had brought her kind mistress into no small trouble.

We had been taking a drive through these beautiful lanes, never more beautiful than when the richly tinted autumnal foliage contrasts with the deep emerald hue of the autumnal herbage, and were admiring the fine effect of the majestic oaks, whose lower branches almost touched the clear water which reflected so brightly the bright blue sky, when Mrs. King, who was well known to my father, advanced to the gate of her little court, and modestly requested to speak with him.

The group in front of the cottage was one which it was impossible to contemplate without strong interest. The poor widow, in her neat crimped cap, her well-worn mourning gown, her apron and handkerchief, coarse, indeed, and of cheap material, but delicately clean, her grey hair parted on her brow, and her pale intelligent countenance, stood leaning against the doorway, holding in one thin trembling hand a letter newly opened, and in the other her spectacles, which she had been fain to take off, half hoping that they had played her false, and that the ill-omened epistle would not be found to contain what had so grieved her. Tom, a fine rosy boy, stout and manly for his years, sat on the ground with Chloe in his arms, giving vent to a most unmanly fit of crying; and Chloe, a dog worthy of Edwin Landseer's pencil, a large and beautiful spaniel, of the scarce old English breed, brown and white, with shining wavy hair feathering her thighs and legs, and clustering into curls towards her tail and forehead, and upon the long glossy magnificent ears which gave so much richness to her fine expressive countenance, looked at him wistfully, with eyes that expressed the fullest sympathy in his affliction, and stooped to lick his hand, and nestled her head in his bosom, as if trying, as far as her caresses had the power, to soothe and comfort him.

"And so, sir," continued Mrs. King, who had been telling her little story to my father, whilst I had been admiring her pet, "this Mr. Poulton, the tax-gatherer, because I refused to give him our Chloe, whom my boy is so fond of that he shares his meals with her, poor fellow, has laid an information against us for keeping a sporting dog — I don't know what the proper word is — and has had us surcharged; and the first that I ever heard of it is by this letter, from which I find that I must pay I don't know how much money by Saturday next, or else my goods will be seized and sold. And I have but just managed to pay

my rent, and where to get a farthing I can't tell. I dare say he would let us off now if I would but give him Chloe; but that I can't find in my heart to do. He 's a hard man, and a bad dog-master. I've all along been afraid that we must part with Chloe, now that she 's growing up like, because of our living so near the preserves—"

"Oh, grandmother!"—interrupted Tom,—"poor Chloe!"

"But I can't give her to *him*. Don't cry so, Tom! I'd sooner have my little goods sold, and lie upon the boards. I should not mind parting with her if she were taken good care of, but I never will give her to him."

"Is this the first you have heard of the matter?" inquired my father; "you ought to have had notice in time to appeal."

"I never heard a word till to-day."

"Poulton seems to say that he sent a letter, nevertheless, and offers to prove the sending, if need be; it 's not in our division, not even in our county, and I am afraid that in this matter of the surcharge I can do nothing," observed my father; "though I have no doubt but it 's a rascally trick to come by the dog. She 's a pretty creature," continued he, stooping down to pat her, and examining her head and mouth with the air of a connoisseur in canine affairs, "a very fine creature. How old is she?"

"Not quite a twelvemonth, sir. She was pupped on the sixteenth of last October, grandmother's birthday, of all the days in the year," said Tom, somewhat comforted by his visiter's evident sympathy.

"The sixteenth of October! Then Mr. Poulton may bid good-bye to his surcharge; for unless she was six months old on the fifth of April she cannot be taxed for this year—so this letter is so much waste paper. I'll write this very night to the chairman of the commissioners, and manage the matter for you. And I'll also write to Master Poulton, and let him know that I 'll acquaint the board if he gives you any further trouble. You 're sure that you can prove the day she was pupped?" continued his worship, highly delighted. "Very lucky! You 'll have nothing to pay for her till next half-year, and then I 'm afraid that this fellow, Poulton, will insist upon her being entered as a sporting dog, which is fourteen shillings. But that 's a future concern. As to the surcharge, I 'll take care of that. A beautiful creature, is she not, Mary? Very lucky that we happened to drive this way." And with kind adieus to Tom and his grandmother, who were as grateful as people could be, we departed.

About a week after, Tom and Chloe, in their turn, appeared at our cottage. All had gone right in the matter of the surcharge. The commissioners had decided in Mrs. King's favour, and Mr. Poulton had been forced to succumb. But the grandmother had considered the danger of offending their good landlord, Sir John, by keeping a sporting dog so near his coverts, and also the difficulty of paying the tax; and both she and Tom had made up their minds to offer Chloe to my father. He had admired her, and everybody said that he was as good a dog-master as Mr. Poulton was a bad one; and he came sometimes coursing to Ashley End, and then perhaps he would let them both see Chloe; "for grandmother," said Tom, "though she seemed somehow ashamed to confess as much, was at the bottom of her heart pretty nigh as fond of her as he was himself. Indeed, he did not know who could help being fond of Chloe, she had so many pretty ways." And Tom, making manful battle against the tears that would start into his eyes, almost as full of affection as the eyes of Chloe herself, and hugging his beautiful pet, who seemed upon her part to have a presentiment of the evil that awaited her, sate down as requested in the hall, whilst my father considered his proposition.

Upon the whole, it seemed to us kindest to the parties concerned, the widow King, Tom, and Chloe, to accept the gift. Sir John was a kind man, and a good landlord, but he was also a keen sportsman; and it was quite certain that he would have no great taste for a dog of such high sporting blood close to his best preserves; the keeper also would probably seize hold of such a neighbour as a scapegoat, in case of any deficiency in the number of hares and pheasants; and then their great enemy, Mr. Poulton, might avail himself of some technical deficiency to bring Mrs. King within the clutch of a surcharge. There might not always be an oversight in that Shylock's bond, nor a wise judge, young or old, to detect it if there were. So that, upon due consideration, my father (determined, of course, to make a proper return for the present) agreed to consider Chloe as his own property; and Tom, having seen her very comfortably installed in clean dry straw in a warm stable, and fed in a manner which gave a satisfactory specimen of her future diet, and being himself regaled with plum-cake and cherry brandy, (a liquor of which he had, he said, heard much talk, and which proved, as my father had augured, exceedingly cheering and consolatory in the moment of affliction,) departed in much better spirits than could have been expected after such a separation. I myself, duly appreciating the merits of Chloe, was a little jealous for my own noble Dash, whom she resembled, with a slight inferiority of size and colouring; much such a resemblance as Viola, I suppose, bore to Sebastian. But upon being reminded of the affinity between the two dogs, (for Dash came originally from Ashley End kennel, and was, as nearly as we could make out, granduncle to Chloe,) and of our singular good fortune in having two such beautiful

spaniels under one roof, my objections were entirely removed.

Under the same roof they did not seem likely to continue. When sent after to the stable the next morning, Chloe was missing. Everybody declared that the door had not been opened, and Dick, who had her in charge, vowed that the key had never been out of his pocket. But accusations and affirmations were equally useless — the bird was flown. Of course she had returned to Ashley End. And upon being sent for to her old abode, Tom was found preparing to bring her to Aberleigh; and Mrs. King suggested, that, having been accustomed to live with them, she would, perhaps, sooner get accustomed to the kitchen fireside than to a stable, however comfortable.

The suggestion was followed. A mat was placed by the side of the kitchen fire; much pains were taken to coax the shy stranger; (Dick, who loved and understood dogs, devoting himself to the task of making himself agreeable to this gentle and beautiful creature;) and she seemed so far reconciled as to suffer his caresses, to lap a little milk when sure that nobody saw her, and even to bridle with instinctive coquetry, when Dash, head and tail up, advanced with a sort of stately and conscious courtesy to examine into the claims of the new-comer. For the first evening all seemed promising; but on the next morning, nobody knew how or when, Chloe eloped to her old quarters.

Again she was fetched back; this time to the parlour: and again she ran away. Then she was tied up, and she gnawed the string; chained up, and she slipped the collar; and we began to think, that unless we could find some good home for her at a distance, there was nothing for it but to return her altogether to Mrs. King, when a letter from a friend at Bath, gave a new aspect to Chloe's affairs.

The letter was from a dear friend of mine— a young married lady, with an invalid husband, and one lovely little girl, a damsel of some two years old, commonly called "Pretty May." They wanted a pet dog to live in the parlour, and walk out with mother and daughter — not a cross yelping Blenheim spaniel, (those troublesome little creatures spoil everybody's manners who is so unlucky as to possess them, the first five minutes of every morning call being invariably devoted to silencing the lapdog and apologising to the visiter,)—not a pigmy Blenheim, but a large noble animal, something, in short, as like as might be to Dash, with whom Mrs. Keating had a personal acquaintance, and for whom, in common with most of his acquaintances, she entertained a very decided partiality: I do not believe that there is a dog in England who has more friends than my Dash. A spaniel was wanted at Bath like my Dash: and what spaniel could be more like Dash than Chloe? A distant home was wanted for Chloe: and what home could open a brighter prospect of canine felicity than to be the pet of Mrs. Keating, and the playmate of Pretty May? It seemed one of those startling coincidences which amuse one by their singular fitness and propriety, and make one believe that there is more in the exploded doctrine of sympathies than can be found in our philosophy.

So, upon the matter being explained to her, thought Mrs. King; and writing duly to announce the arrival of Chloe, she was deposited, with a quantity of soft hay, in a large hamper, and conveyed into Belford by my father himself, who would entrust to none other the office of delivering her to the coachman, and charging that very civil member of a very civil body of men to have especial care of the pretty creature, who was parted with for no other fault than an excess of affection and fidelity to her first kind protectors.

Nothing could exceed the brilliancy of her reception. Pretty May, the sweet smiling child of a sweet smiling mother, had been kept up a full hour after her usual time to welcome the stranger, and was so charmed with this her first living toy, that it was difficult to get her to bed. She divided her own supper with poor Chloe, hungry after her long journey; rolled with her upon the Turkey carpet, and at last fell asleep with her arms clasped round her new pet's neck, and her bright face, coloured like lilies and roses, flung across her body; Chloe enduring these caresses with a careful, quiet gentleness, which immediately won for her the hearts of the lovely mother, of the fond father, (for to an accomplished and right-minded man, in delicate health, what a treasure is a little prattling girl, his only one!) of two grandmothers, of three or four young aunts, and of the whole tribe of nursery attendants. Never was debût so successful, as Chloe's first appearance in Camden Place.

As her new dog had been Pretty May's last thought at night, so was it her first on awakening. He shared her breakfast as he had shared her supper; and immediately after breakfast, mother and daughter, attended by nursery-maid and footman, sallied forth to provide proper luxuries for Chloe's accommodation. First they purchased a sheepskin rug; then a splendid porcelain trough for water, and a porcelain dish to match, for food; then a spaniel basket, duly lined, and stuffed, and curtained—a splendid piece of canine upholstery; then a necklace-like collar with silver bells, which was left to have the address engraved upon the clasp; and then May, finding herself in the vicinity of a hosier and a shoemaker, bethought herself of a want which undoubtedly had not occurred to any other of her party, and holding up her own pretty little foot, demanded "tilk tocks and boo thoose for Tloë."

For two days did Chloe endure the petting and the luxuries. On the third she disappeared. Great was the consternation in Camden Place. Pretty May cried as she had never been known to cry before; and papa, mamma, grandmammas, aunts, nursery and housemaids, fretted and wondered, wondered and fretted, and vented their distress in every variety of exclamation, from the refined language of the drawing-room to the patois of a Somersetshire kitchen. Rewards were offered, and handbills dispersed over the town. She was cried, and she was advertised; and at last, giving up every hope of her recovery, Mrs. Keating wrote to me.

It happened that we received the letter on one of those soft November days, which sometimes intervene between the rough winds of October and the crisp frosts of Christmas, and which, although too dirty under foot to be quite pleasant for walking, are yet, during the few hours that the sun is above the horizon, mild enough for an open carriage in our shady lanes, strewed as they are at that period with the yellow leaves of the elm, whilst the hedgerows are still rich with the tawny foliage of the oak, and the rich colouring of the hawthorn and the bramble. It was such weather as the Americans generally enjoy at this season, and call by the pretty name of the Indian summer. And we resolved to avail ourselves of the fineness of the day to drive to Ashley End, and inform Mrs. King and Tom (who we felt ought to know) of the loss of Chloe, and our fear, according with Mrs. Keating's, that she had been stolen; adding our persuasion, which was also that of Mrs. Keating, that, fall into whatever hands she might, she was too beautiful and valuable not to ensure good usage.

On the way we were overtaken by the good widow's landlord, returning from hunting, in his red coat and top-boots, who was also bound to Ashley End. As he rode chatting by the side of the carriage, we could not forbear telling him our present errand, and the whole story of poor Chloe. How often, without being particularly uncharitable in judging of our neighbours, we have the gratification of finding them even better than we had supposed! He blamed us for not having thought well enough of him to put the whole affair into his management from the first, and exclaimed against us for fearing that he would compare the preserves and the pheasant-shooting with such an attachment as had subsisted between his good old tenant and her faithful dog. "By Jove!" cried he, "I would have paid the tax myself rather than they should have been parted. But it's too late to talk of that now, for, of course, the dog is stolen. Eighty miles is too far even for a spaniel to find its way back! Carried by coach, too! I would give twenty pounds willingly to replace her with old Dame King and Master Tom. By the way, we must see what can be done for that boy—he 's a fine spanking fellow. We must consult his grandmother. The descendant of two faithful servants has an hereditary claim to all that can be done for him. How could *you* imagine that I should be thinking of these coverts?—I, that am as great a dog-lover as Dame King herself! I have a great mind to be very angry with you."

These words, spoken in the good sportsman's earnest, hearty, joyous, kindly voice, (*that* ought to have given an assurance of his kindly nature,—I have a religious faith in voices,) these words brought us within sight of Ashley End, and there, in front of the cottage, we saw a group which fixed our attention at once: Chloe, her own identical self—poor, dear Chloe, apparently just arrived, dirty, weary, jaded, wet, lying in Tom's arms as he sat on the ground, feeding her with the bacon and cabbage, his own and his grandmother's dinner, all the contents of the platter; and she, too happy to eat, wagging her tail as if she would wag it off; now licking Mrs. King's hands as the good old dame leant over her, the tears streaming from her eyes: now kissing Tom's honest face, who broke into loud laughter for very joy, and, with looks that spoke as plain as ever looks did speak, "Here I am come home again to those whom I love best—to those who best love me!" Poor dear Chloe! Even we whom she left, sympathised with her fidelity. Poor dear Chloe! there we found her, and there, I need not, I hope, say, we left her, one of the happiest of living creatures.

THE LOST DAHLIA.

If to have "had losses" be, as affirmed by Dogberry, in one of Shakspeare's most charming plays, and corroborated by Sir Walter Scott in one of his most charming romances —(those two names do well in juxtaposition, the great Englishman! the great Scotsman!) —If to have "had losses" be a main proof of credit and respectability, then am I one of the most responsible persons in the whole county of Berks. To say nothing of the graver matters which figure in a banker's book, and make, in these days of pounds, shillings, and pence, so large a part of the domestic tragedy of life—putting wholly aside all the grander transitions of property in house and land, of money on mortgage, and money in the funds—(and yet I might put in my claim to no trifling amount of ill luck in that way also, if I had a mind to try my hand at a dismal story)—counting for nought all weightier grievances, there is not a lady within twenty miles who can produce so large a list of small losses as my unfortunate self.

From the day when, a tiny damsel of some four years old, I first had a pocket-handkerchief to lose, down to this very night—I will not say how many years after — when, as I have just discovered, I have most certainly lost from my pocket the new cambric kerchief which I deposited therein a little before dinner, scarcely a week has passed without some part of my goods and chattels being returned missing. Gloves, muffs, parasols, reticules, have each of them a provoking knack of falling from my hands; boas glide from my neck, rings slip from my fingers, the bow has vanished from my cap, the veil from my bonnet, the sandal from my foot, the brooch from my collar, and the collar from my brooch. The trinket which I liked best, a jewelled pin, the first gift of a dear friend, (luckily the friendship is not necessarily appended to the token,) dropped from my shawl in the midst of the high road; and of shawls themselves, there is no end to the loss. The two prettiest that ever I had in my life, one a splendid specimen of Glasgow manufacture—a scarlet hardly to be distinguished from Cashmere—the other a lighter and cheaper fabric, white in the centre, with a delicate sprig, and a border harmoniously compounded of the deepest blue, the brightest orange, and the richest brown, disappeared in two successive summers and winters, in the very bloom of their novelty, from the folds of the phaeton, in which they had been deposited for safety—fairly blown overboard! If I left things about, they were lost. If I put them away, they were lost. They were lost in the drawers —they were lost out. And if for a miracle I had them safe under lock and key, why, then, I lost my keys! I was certainly the most unlucky person under the sun. If there was nothing else to lose, I was fain to lose myself — I mean my way; bewildered in these Aberleigh lanes of ours, or in the woodland recesses of the Penge, as if haunted by that fairy, Robin Goodfellow, who led Hermia and Helena such a dance in the Midsummer Night's Dream. Alas! that there should be no Fairies now-a-days, or rather, no true believers in Fairies, to help us to bear the burthen of our own mortal carelessness.

It was not quite all carelessness, though! Some ill luck did mingle with a great deal of mismanagement, as the "one poor happ'orth of bread" with the huge gallon of sack in the bill of which Poins picked Falstaff's pocket when he was asleep behind the arras. Things belonging to me, or things that I cared for, did contrive to get lost, without my having any hand in the matter. For instance, if out of the variety of "talking birds," starlings, jackdaws, and magpies, which my father delights to entertain, any one particularly diverting or accomplished, more than usually coaxing and mischievous, happened to attract my attention, and to pay me the compliment of following at my heels, or perching upon my shoulder, the gentleman was sure to hop off. My favourite mare, Pearl, the pretty docile creature which draws my little phaeton, has such a talent for leaping, that she is no sooner turned out in either of our meadows, than she disappears. And Dash himself, paragon of spaniels, pet of pets, beauty of beauties, has only one shade of imperfection—would be thoroughly faultless, if it were not for a slight tendency to run away. He is regularly lost four or five times every winter, and has been oftener cried through the streets of Belford, and advertised in the county newspapers, than comports with a dog of his dignity. Now, these mischances clearly belong to that class of accidents commonly called casualties, and are quite unconnected with any infirmity of temperament on my part. I cannot help Pearl's proficiency in jumping, nor Dash's propensity to wander through the country; neither had I any hand in the loss which has given its title to this paper, and which, after so much previous dallying, I am at length about to narrate.

The autumn before last, that is to say, above a year ago, the boast and glory of my little garden was a dahlia called the Phœbus. How it came there, nobody very distinctly knew, nor where it came from, nor how we came by it, nor how it came by its own most appropriate name. Neither the lad who tends our flowers, nor my father, the person chiefly concerned in procuring them, nor I myself, who more even than my father or John take delight and pride in their beauty, could recollect who gave us this most splendid plant, or who first instructed us as to the style and title by which it was known. Certes never was blossom fitlier named. Regular as the sun's face in an almanac, it had a tint of golden scarlet, of ruddy yellow, which realized Shakspeare's gorgeous expression of "flame coloured." The sky at sunset sometimes puts on such a hue, or a fire at Christmas when it burns red as well as bright. The blossom was dazzling to look upon. It seemed as if there were light in the leaves, like that coloured lamp of a flower, the Oriental Poppy. Phœbus was not too glorious a name for that dahlia. The Golden-haired Apollo might be proud of such an emblem. It was worthy of the god of day; — a very Phœnix of floral beauty.

Every dahlia-fancier who came into our garden, or who had an opportunity of seeing a bloom elsewhere; and, sooth to say, we were rather ostentatious in our display; John put it into stands, and jars, and baskets, and dishes; Dick stuck it into Dash's collar, his own button-hole, and Pearl's bridle; my father presented it to such lady visiters as he delighted to honour; and I, who have the habit of dangling a flower, generally a sweet one, caught myself more than once rejecting the spicy clove and the starry jessamine, the

blossomed myrtle and the tuberose, my old fragrant favourites, for this scentless (but triumphant) beauty; everybody who beheld the Phœbus begged for a plant or a cutting; and we, generous in our ostentation, willing to redeem the vice by the virtue, promised as many plants and cuttings as we could reasonably imagine the root might be made to produce* — perhaps rather more; and half the dahlia-growers round rejoiced over the glories of the gorgeous flower, and speculated, as the wont is now, upon seedling after seedling to the twentieth generation.

Alas for the vanity of human expectations! February came, the twenty-second of February, the very St. Valentine of dahlias, when the roots which have been buried in the ground during the winter are disinterred, and placed in a hotbed to put forth their first shoots previous to the grand operations of potting and dividing them. Of course, the first object of search in the choicest corner of the nicely-labelled hoard, was the Phœbus: but no Phœbus was forthcoming; root and label had vanished bodily! There was, to be sure, a dahlia without a label, which we would gladly have transformed into the missing treasure; but, as we speedily discovered a label without a dahlia, it was but too obvious that they belonged to each other. Until last year we might have had plenty of the consolation which results from such divorces of the name from the thing; for our labels, sometimes written upon parchment, sometimes upon leather, sometimes upon wood, as each material happened to be recommended by gardening authorities, and fastened on with packthread, or whip-cord, or silk twist, had generally parted company from the roots, and frequently become utterly illegible, producing a state of confusion which most undoubtedly we never expected to regret: but this year we had followed the one perfect system of labels of unglazed china, highly varnished after writing on them, and fastened on by wire; and it had answered so completely, that one, and one only, had broken from its moorings. No hope could be gathered from that quarter. The Phœbus was gone. So much was clear; and our loss being fully ascertained, we all began, as the custom is, to divert our grief and exercise our ingenuity by different guesses as to the fate of the vanished treasure.

My father, although certain that he had written the label, and wired the root, had his misgivings about the place in which it had been deposited, and half suspected that it had slipt in amongst a basket which he had sent as a present to Ireland; I myself, judging from a similar accident which had once happened to a choice hyacinth bulb, partly thought that one or other of us might have put it for care and safety in some snug corner, that it would be six months before it turned up; John, impressed with a high notion of the money-value of the property, and estimating it something as a keeper of the regalia might estimate the most precious of the crown jewels, boldly affirmed that it was stolen; and Dick, who had just had a démêlé with the cook, upon the score of her refusal to dress a beef-steak for a sick greyhound, asserted, between jest and earnest, that that hard-hearted official had either ignorantly or maliciously boiled the root for a Jerusalem artichoke, and that we, who stood lamenting over our regretted Phœbus, had actually eaten it, dished up with white sauce. John turned pale at the thought. The beautiful story of the Falcon, in Boccaccio, which the young knight killed to regale his mistress, or the still more tragical history of Couci, who minced his rival's heart, and served it up to his wife, could not have affected him more deeply. We grieved over our lost dahlia, as if it had been a thing of life.

Grieving, however, would not repair our loss; and we determined, as the only chance of becoming again possessed of this beautiful flower, to visit, as soon as the dahlia season began, all the celebrated collections in the neighbourhood, especially all those from which there was any chance of our having procured the root which had so mysteriously vanished.

Early in September, I set forth on my voyage of discovery — my voyages, I ought to say; for every day I and my pony-phaeton made our way to whatever garden within our reach bore a sufficiently high character to be suspected of harbouring the good Dahlia Phœbus.

Monday we called at Lady A.'s; Tuesday at General B.'s; Wednesday at Sir John C.'s; Thursday at Mrs. D.'s; Friday at Lord E.'s; and Saturday at Mrs. F.'s. We might as well have staid at home; not a Phœbus had they, or any thing like one.

We then visited the nurseries, from Brown's, at Slough, a princely establishment, worthy of its regal neighbourhood, to the pretty rural gardens at South Warnborough, not forgetting our own most intelligent and obliging nurseryman, Mr. Sutton of Reading—(Belford Regis, I mean) — whose collection of flowers of all sorts is amongst the most choice and select that I have ever known. Hundreds of magnificent blossoms did we see in our progress, but not the blossom we wanted.

There was no lack, heaven knows, of dahlias of the desired colour. Besides a score of "Orange Perfections," bearing the names of their respective growers, we were introduced

*It is wonderful how many plants may, by dint of forcing, and cutting and forcing again, be extracted from one root. But the experiment is not always safe. Nature sometimes avenges herself for the encroachments of art, by weakening the progeny. The Napoleon Dahlia, for instance, the finest of last year's seedlings, being over-propagated, this season has hardly produced one perfect bloom, even in the hands of the most skilful cultivators.

to four Princes of Orange, three Kings of Holland, two Williams the Third, and one Lord Roden.* We were even shown a bloom called the Phœbus, about as like to our Phœbus "as I to Hercules." But the true Phœbus, "the real Simon Pure," was as far to seek as ever.

Learnedly did I descant with the learned in dahlias over the merits of my lost beauty. "It was a cupped flower, Mr. Sutton," quoth I, to my agreeable and sympathising listener; (gardeners *are* a most cultivated and gentlemanly race;) "a cupped dahlia, of the genuine metropolitan shape; large as the Criterion, regular as the Springfield Rival, perfect as Dodd's Mary, with a long bloom stalk like those good old flowers, the Countess of Liverpool and the Widnall's Perfection. And such a free blower, and so true! I am quite sure that there is not so good a dahlia this year. I prefer it to 'Corinne,' over and over." And Mr. Sutton assented and condoled, and I was as near to being comforted as anybody could be, who had lost such a flower as the Phœbus.

After so many vain researches, most persons would have abandoned the pursuit in despair. But despair is not in my nature. I have a comfortable share of the quality which the possessor is wont to call perseverance—whilst the uncivil world is apt to designate it by the name of obstinacy—and do not easily give in. Then the chase, however fruitless, led, like other chases, into beautiful scenery, and formed an excuse for my visiting or revisiting many of the prettiest places in the county.

Two of the most remarkable spots in the neighbourhood are, as it happens, famous for their collections of dahlias—Strathfield-saye, the seat of the Duke of Wellington, and the ruins of Reading Abbey.

Nothing can well be prettier than the drive to Strathfield-saye, passing, as we do, through a great part of Heckfield Heath,† a tract of wild woodland, a forest, or rather a chase, full of fine sylvan beauty — thickets of fern and holly, and hawthorn and birch, surmounted by oaks and beeches, and interspersed with lawny glades and deep pools, letting light into the picture. Nothing can be prettier than the approach to the duke's lodge. And the entrance to the demesne, through a deep dell dark with magnificent firs, from which we emerge into a finely wooded park of the richest verdure, is also striking and impressive. But the distinctive feature of the place (for the mansion, merely a comfortable and convenient nobleman's house, hardly responds to the fame of its owner) is the grand avenue of noble elms, three quarters of a mile long, which leads to the front door. It is difficult to imagine anything which more completely realises the poetical fancy, that the pillars and arches of a Gothic cathedral were borrowed from the interlacing of the branches of trees planted at stated intervals, than this avenue, in which Nature has so completely succeeded in outrivalling her handmaiden Art, that not a single trunk, hardly even a bough or a twig, appears to mar the grand regularity of the design as a piece of perspective. No cathedral aisle was ever more perfect; and the effect, under every variety of aspect, the magical light and shadow of the cold white moonshine, the cold green light of a cloudy day, and the glancing sunbeams which pierce through the leafy umbrage in the bright summer noon, are such as no words can convey. Separately considered, each tree (and the north of Hampshire is celebrated for the size and shape of its elms) is a model of stately growth, and they are now just at perfection, probably about a hundred and thirty years old. There is scarcely perhaps in the kingdom such another avenue.

On one side of this noble approach is the garden, where, under the care of the skilful and excellent gardener, Mr. Cooper, so many magnificent dahlias are raised, but where, alas! the Phœbus was not; and between that and the mansion is the sunny, shady paddock, with its rich pasture and its roomy stable, where, for so many years, Copenhagen, the charger who carried the Duke at Waterloo, formed so great an object of attraction to the visiters of Strathfield-saye.‡ Then came the house itself, and then I returned home.

* The nomenclature of dahlias is a curious sign of the times. It rivals in oddity that of the Racing Calendar. Next to the peerage, Shakspeare and Homer seem to be the chief sources whence they have derived their appellations. Thus we have Hectors and Diomedes of all colours, a very black Othello, and a very fair Desdemona. One beautiful blossom, which seems like a white ground thickly rouged with carmine, is called "the Honourable Mrs. Harris;" and it is droll to observe how punctiliously the working gardeners retain the dignified prefix in speaking of the flower. I heard the other day of a *serious* dahlia-grower who had called his seedlings after his favourite preachers, so that we shall have the Reverend Edward So-and-so, and the Reverend John Such-an-one, fraternizing with the profane Ariels and Imogenes, the Giaours and Medoras of the old catalogue. So much the better. Floriculture is amongst the most innocent and humanizing of all pleasures, and everything which tends to diffuse such pursuits amongst those who have too few amusements, is a point gained for happiness and for virtue.

† It may be interesting to the lovers of literature to hear that my accomplished friend Mrs. Trollope was "raised," as her friends the Americans would say, upon this spot. Her father, the Rev. William Milton, himself a very clever man, and an able mechanician and engineer, held the living of Heckfield for many years.

‡ Copenhagen—(I had the honour of naming one of Mr. Cooper's dahlias after him—a sort of *bay* dahlia, if I may be permitted the expression)—Copenhagen was a most interesting horse. He died last year at the age of twenty-seven. He was therefore in his prime on the day of Waterloo, when the duke (then and still a man of iron) rode him for seventeen hours and a half, without dismounting. When his Grace got off, he patted him, and the horse kicked, to the great delight of his brave rider, as it proved that he

Well! this was one beautiful and fruitless drive. The ruins of Reading Abbey formed another as fruitless, and still more beautiful.

Whether in the "palmy state" of the faith of Rome, the pillared aisles of the Abbey church might have vied in grandeur with the avenue at Strathfield-saye, I can hardly say; but certainly, as they stand, the venerable arched gateway, the rock-like masses of wall, the crumbling cloisters, and the exquisite finish of the surbases of the columns and other fragments, fresh as if chiseled yesterday, which are reappearing in the excavations now making, there is an interest which leaves the grandeur of life, palaces and their pageantry, parks and their adornments, all grandeur except the indestructible grandeur of nature, at an immeasurable distance. The place was a history. Centuries passed before us as we thought of the magnificent monastery, the third in size and splendour in England, with its area of thirty acres between the walls — and gazed upon it now!

And yet, even now, how beautiful! Trees of every growth mingling with those grey ruins, creepers wreathing their fantastic garlands around the mouldering arches, gorgeous flowers flourishing in the midst of that decay! I almost forgot my search for the dear Phœbus, as I rambled with my friend, Mr. Malone, the gardener, a man who would in any station be remarkable for acuteness and acquirement, amongst the august remains of the venerable abbey, with the history of which he was as conversant as with his own immediate profession. There was no speaking of smaller objects in the presence of the mighty past! — *Vide note at the end of this article.*

Gradually chilled by so much unsuccess, the ardour of my pursuit began to abate. I began to admit the merits of other dahlias of divers colours, and actually caught myself committing the inconstancy of considering which of the four Princes of Orange I should bespeak for next year. Time, in short, was beginning to play his part as the great comforter of human afflictions, and the poor Phœbus seemed as likely to be forgotten as a last year's bonnet, or a last week's newspaper — when, happening to walk with my father to look at a field of his, a pretty bit of upland pasture about a mile off, I was struck, in one corner where the manure for dressing had been deposited, and a heap of earth and dung still remained, to be spread, I suppose, next spring, with some tall plant surmounted with bright flowers. Could it be? — was it possible? — did my eyes play me false? — No; there it was, upon a dunghill—the object of all my researches and lamentations, the identical Phœbus! the lost dahlia!

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was not beaten by that tremendous day's work. After his return, this paddock was assigned to him, in which he passed the rest of his life in the most perfect comfort that can be imagined; fed twice a-day, (latterly upon oats broken for him,) with a comfortable stable to retire to, and a rich pasture in which to range. The late amiable duchess used regularly to feed him with bread, and this kindness had given him the habit, (especially after her death,) of approaching every lady with the most confiding familiarity. He had been a fine animal, of middle size and a chestnut colour, but latterly he exhibited an interesting specimen of natural decay, in a state as nearly that of nature as can well be found in a civilized country. He had lost an eye from age, and had become lean and feeble, and, in the manner in which he approached even a casual visiter, there was something of the demand of sympathy, the appeal to human kindness, which one has so often observed from a very old dog towards his master. Poor Copenhagen, who, when alive, furnished so many reliques from his mane and tail to enthusiastic young ladies, who had his hair set in brooches and rings, was, after being interred with military honours, dug up by some miscreant, (never, I believe, discovered,) and one of his hoofs cut off, it is to be presumed, for a memorial, although one that would hardly go in the compass of a ring. A very fine portrait of Copenhagen has been executed by my young friend Edmund Havell, a youth of seventeen, whose genius as an animal painter will certainly place him second only to Landseer.

Note.—By far the most interesting object in our neighbourhood has always seemed to me the rock-like ruins of Reading Abbey, themselves a history; all the more interesting because, until lately, that, the most important part of these remains has become the property of my friend, Mr. Wheble, the present High Sheriff of Berks, whose researches have drawn some attention to the subject, these venerable relics of an earlier day, situate close to a wealthy and populous town, not forty miles from London, and actually within sight of the great road from Bath and Bristol to the metropolis, have seemed utterly unnoticed and unknown. Here and there, indeed, some fanciful virtuoso, like Marshal Conway, (best known as the friend and correspondent of Horace Walpole,) has evinced his passion for antiquity by the desire of appropriating what he admired, and has dragged away whole masses of the walls to assist in his fantastical doings at Henley and elsewhere,—or a set of Goths and Vandals, the county magistrates of fifty years ago (sure am I that their successors would not have dreamed of such a desecration) have pitched upon the outskirts of the old monastery for the erection of their huge, staring, glaring gaol and Bridewell, with all its miserable associations of wretchedness and crime,—or an education committee, with equal bad taste in a different way (they really seem to have imagined that they had done a fine thing) have run up a roof of red tiles within the walls of the refectory, and moved the children of a national school, upon Dr. Bell's system, into the noble hall, where kings had signed edicts and parliaments framed laws. This last nuisance has been abated. The children have now a schoolroom of their own, far better adapted to its object, more healthful and more comfortable, and the Abbey is left to the silence and solitude which best beseem the recollections and associations attendant on this stupendous structure.

Reading Abbey was founded by Henry the First, in the beginning of the year 1121, and dedicated to the honour of the Virgin Mary and St. John, as appears by the charter granted four years afterwards:— *vide* Dugdale's Monasticon; "for my soul's health, and the souls of King William my father, of my son William, of Queen Matilda my mother, of Queen Matilda my wife, and of all my predecessors and successors."

The charter then goes on to recite the immense pos-

sessions and regal privileges bestowed upon the monastery at Reading and its cells at Leominster and at Cholsey.

It grants them a mint, with the privilege of striking money.

It exempts them from all taxes, imposts, or contributions whatsoever, and from all levies of men for wars or other services.

It gives "the abbot and his monks full power to try all offences committed within or without the borough, in the highways, and all other places, whether by their own servants or strangers, with all causes which can or may arise with socca* and sacca,† tol, and theam,‡ and infangentheft,§ and outfangentheft,‖ and ham socna.¶ within the borough and without the borough, in the roads and footpaths, and in all places, and with all causes which do or may arise.

"And the abbot and his monks shall hold courts of justice for trials of assaults, thefts, and murders, for the shedding of blood, and breaches of the peace, in the same manner that belongs to the royal authority," &c. &c.

Then follows a paragraph which we insert in honour of the accomplished founder. It is worthy of Alfred.

"But this also we determine and appoint to be for ever observed, that seeing the Abbot of Radynge hath no revenues but what are in common with his brethren; therefore, whoever by devise, consent, and canonical election shall be made abbot, shall not bestow the alms of the monastery on his lay kindred or any others, but reserve them for the entertainment of the poor and strangers."

And William of Malmesbury certifies that this part of the charter was so well observed, that there was always more expended upon strangers than upon the inhabitants, "the monks being," as he asserts, "great examples of piety."

The charter concludes with a strenuous recommendation to all succeeding kings to continue the above privileges and immunities to the monastery, and with this remarkable malison, the fear of which Beauclerc's burly successor, Henry, the eighth of that name, most assuredly had not before his eyes, when he hanged the abbot and knocked down the walls.

"But if any one shall knowingly presume to infringe, diminish, or alter this our foundation charter, may the great God of all withdraw and eradicate him and his posterity, and may he remain without any inheritance, in misery and hunger," &c.

The extent and magnificence of the monastery were commensurate with the high privileges granted by the royal founder, and with the station of the superior, who ranked as third amongst the mitred abbots of England: next after the abbots of Glastenbury and St. Alban's.

A space of thirty acres was comprised within the outer walls; and though a considerable part of this was devoted to the inner and outer courts, the cloisters, and the gardens, yet the building itself was stupendous in size and in strength. I have seen decayed specimens of gothic architecture which bear more striking traces of lightness and ornament, but none that ever seemed so calculated for duration, so prodigally massive and solid. The great hall, whose noble proportions are eighty feet in length, forty in width, and forty to the centre of the arched stone ceiling, had walls six feet thick, coated with freestone, and filled up with flints and stones, cemented with a mortar as durable as the materials themselves. This was the width of all the walls, inner as well as outer, and seems to be only a fair sample of the general proportions of the apartments. The foundations under ground were seven feet deep and twelve wide; and the excavations making in the church, of which many of the surbases of the columns, bits of stained glass and other ornamental parts, remain as fresh as if only finished yesterday, prove that the execution of this magnificent pile was as perfect and beautiful as the design was stupendous and grand. Sir Henry Englefield says, (Archælogia,) every form of Saxon moulding, and many never seen before, may be found in the stones dispersed through the town.

Everything belonging to these magnificent monks seems to have been conducted with this union of largeness and finish. They appear to have brought for their use, from the river Kennett, a canal called the Holy (or Hallowed) Brook, from Coley, an elevated spot nearly two miles from the Abbey, conducting it by a descent so equal and gradual, that it moved the Abbey mills (which still exist) with the same regularity in the most parching droughts or the wildest floods, even taking the precautions of paving it with brick, and arching it in great part over, during its passage through the town. And having thus provided themselves with soft water, and with the constant assurance of grinding their corn through every season, however unfavourable, they provided themselves with the luxury of spring water from the conduit, a celebrated spring rising on a hill on another side of Reading, and at least a mile from the abode of the lord abbot. This water was brought to the monastery in pipes, and from a discovery made accidentally by some labourers who were excavating a sawpit in a bank on the south side of the Kennett, in the middle of the last century, it appears to have passed *under* the Kennett. The story is told in Mann's history of Reading.—"They" (the men employed at the sawpit) "found a leaden pipe, about two inches in diameter, lying in the direction of the conduit, and passing under the river towards the Abbey, part of which, from its situation under the water, they were obliged to leave. The rest was sold for old lead." Coates also brings undoubted testimony to prove that the conduit spring supplied the Abbey, and that the water was brought under the Kennett.

Certainly, as the river runs between the conduit and the Abbey, the pipe must have gone under or over it; but the fact is worth mentioning as curious in itself, and as tending to prove, in these days, when we are a little apt, if not to overvalue our own doings, at least to undervalue those of our ancestors, that, not merely in architecture, (for in that grandest art we are pigmies indeed, compared to those great masters whose names are lost, though their works, in spite of a thousand foes, seem indestructible,) that not in architecture only, but in tunnel-making, we might take lessons from those old-fashioned personages the monks.

From the period of its consecration, we find the name of Reading Abbey occurring frequently in all the histories of the times. Parliaments and councils were holden there; legates received; traitors executed; kings, queens, and princes buried in the holy precincts. Speed mentions, picturesquely, King Henry and his Queen "who lay there veiled and crowned." Bishops were consecrated, joustings celebrated, knights dubbed, and money coined.

One incident which has reference to the Abbey, related by Stowe, is so romantic that I cannot refrain from giving the story. It would make a fine dramatic scene—almost a drama.

"In 1167, a single combat was fought at Reading, between Robert de Montford, appellant, and Henry de Essex, defendant; the occasion of which was as follows. In an engagement which Henry the Second

* Socca, the place or precinct wherein the liberty of court was exercised.

† Sacca, a liberty granted by the king to try and judge causes, and to receive the forfeitures arising from them.

‡ Theam, a privilege to take and keep bondsmen, villains, and serfs, with their generations, one after another.

§ Infangentheft, a liberty to try and judge a thief taken within the jurisdiction of the manor or borough.

‖ Outfangentheft, the same privilege to try any thief taken out of the jurisdiction of the manor or borough.

¶ Ham Soena, the levying a fine on the disturbers of the king's peace.

had with the Welsh, in 1157, some of his nobles, who had been detached with a considerable part of the army, were cut off by an ambuscade; those who escaped, thinking the king was also surrounded, told every one they met that he was either taken or slain.

"The news of this imaginary disaster put to flight the greatest part of the surviving army. Among the rest, Henry de Essex, hereditary standard-bearer to the kings of England, threw away the royal banner, and fled. For this act of cowardice he was challenged by Robert de Montford as a traitor. Essex denied the charge, declaring he was fully persuaded that the king was slain or taken; which probably would have happened, if Roger, Earl of Clare, had not brought up a body of troops, and, by displaying again the royal standard, encouraged the soldiers; by which means he preserved the remainder of the army.

"The king ordered this quarrel to be decided by single combat; and the two knights met at Reading, on the 8th of April, on an island,* near the Abbey, the king being present in person, with many of the nobility and other spectators. Montford began the combat with great fury, and Essex, having endured this violent attack for some time, at length turning into rage, took upon himself the part of a challenger and not of a defender. He fell after receiving many wounds; and the king, supposing him slain, at the request of several noblemen, his relations, gave permission to the monks to inter the body, commanding that no further violence should be offered to it. The monks took up the vanquished knight, and carried him into the Abbey, where he revived. When he recovered from his wounds, he was received into the community and assumed the habit of the order, his lands being forfeited to the king."

Such was the Abbey from its foundation to the Reformation; succeeding Monarchs augmenting its demesnes and revenues by magnificent gifts, and confirming by successive charters the privileges and immunities enjoyed by the abbot and monks; for although the superior had various country-houses and parks, and was a spiritual peer of the highest rank, there yet appears, from many of the rules which have come down to us, one especially, in which no member of the community could absent himself for a night without first obtaining permission from every individual monk in the convent, sufficient reason to believe that the internal government of the house was not altogether monarchial, but that it partook somewhat of the mixed form of the English constitution, and that the commons, if we may so term the brethren of the order, had some voice in the management of its concerns.

Upon the whole, the rule of the monks of Reading over their vassals, the burghers, and their feudal tenants in the villages round, to say nothing of their dependent cells at Leominster and at Cholsey, seems to have been mild, benevolent, and charitable. Rich landlords are, generally speaking, kind landlords; it is those who are themselves pushed for money who become hard creditors in return; and besides the wealth that flowed into the good borough from the trains of knights and nobles who attended the parliaments and councils held in the Abbey, the fathers of the community were not only zealous protectors of their vassals against the aggressions so common in that age of violence, but they furnished alms to the poor, shelter to the houseless, and medical aid to the sick, from their own resources. Traces of their power and their charity, as well as of the manners of the times, meet us constantly in the incidental allusions to the Abbey in our old historians and topographers; thus, for instance, amongst the hospitals attached to the foundation, mention is made of a house for lepers at Erleigh.

That the town flourished under their guardian care, is sufficiently proved, by the fact that Speed's map,† taken a comparatively short period after the Reformation, might almost have passed for a plan of Reading forty years ago, so little had the old town increased (it has made a huge spring in the present century) during the long period that intervened between Elizabeth and George the Third.

The palmy days of the church of Rome in this country were, however, numbered, and upon none of the great monastic establishments did the storm of the Reformation burst with more unsparing violence than upon the fated Abbey of Reading.

In September, 1539, John London, one of the commissioners for visiting and suppressing religious houses, arrived at Reading, and notwithstanding the submission of Hugh, the then abbot, which appears to have been implicit, he was hanged and quartered with two of his monks at one of the gates of the monastery, on the 14th of November following.

The work of destruction then commenced. No particulars of the demolition of the Abbey have come down to us; but it is clear that the magnificent church was levelled at once, partly, perhaps, for the sake of the valuable materials, and partly to prevent the people, attached by habit to the splendid ceremonies of the Catholic worship, from clinging to the cherished associations connected with the spot.

The site of the monastery itself remained with the crown, and a part of the house was converted into a royal residence, visited more than once by Elizabeth, and mentioned by Camden. But the enormous possessions of the Abbey granted to one favourite and another, were slowly frittered away, while what remained of the house itself was nearly destroyed in the siege of Reading during the civil wars.

Every twenty years has brought a fresh diminution, until little now remains, except the shell of the refectory, and of one or two other large detached buildings more or less entire, parts of the cloisters, and large rock-like fragments of the grey walls, denuded of the cut free-stone by which they were coated, some upright, some leaning against each other, and some pitched violently into the earth, as if by a tremendous convulsion of nature. But in the very absence of artificial ornament, in the massiveness and vastness of these remains, there is something singularly impressive and majestic. They have about them much of the hoary grandeur, the wild and naked desolation which characterize Stonehenge. And as the paltry modern buildings which disfigured them are gradually disappearing, there is every reason to hope, from the excellent taste of the present proprietor, that as soon as the excavations which have brought to light so much that is curious and beautiful shall be completed, they may be left to the great artist Nature, so that we may, in a few years, see our once-famous Abbey more august and beautiful than it has been at any period since the days of its pristine magnificence; rescued, as far as is now possible, from the din and bustle of

* Tradition assigns as the place of this combat a beautiful green island nearly surrounded with willows, in the midst of the Thames, to the east of Caversham bridge. A more beautiful spot could not have been devised for such a combat. It was in sight of the Abbey, and of the remarkable chapel erected in the centre of the bridge, of which the foundation still remains, surmounted by a modern house.

† Very curious is this old map of "Redding." The vacant spaces representing fields round the town being illustrated by certain curious representations of trees and animals particularly unlike, such as a cow in the act of being milked, (the sex of the milking figure is doubtful, the dress being equally unsuitable to man or woman, girl or boy,) two horses fighting, with sheep grazing, and another creature which may stand for a pig or an ox at discretion, standing at ease in a meadow. It is remarkable that each of these animals would make three or four of the trees, under which it is supposed to stand, and is very much bigger and taller than any church in the place. Those old artists had strange notions of perspective and proportion.

this work-a-day world, and rising like the stately ruins of Netley, or rather like the tall grey cliffs of some sylvan solitude, from the fine elastic turf, a natural carpet, the green elder bush and the young ash tree growing amongst the mouldering niches, the ivy and the wall-flower waving from above, and the bright, clear river flowing silently along, adorning and reflecting a scene which is at once a picture and a history.

HONOR O'CALLAGHAN.

Times are altered since Gray spoke of the young Etonians as a set of dirty boys playing at cricket. There are no such things as boys to be met with now, either at Eton or elsewhere; they are all men from ten years old upwards. Dirt also hath vanished bodily, to be replaced by finery. An aristocratic spirit, an aristocracy not of rank but of money, possesses the place, and an enlightened young gentleman of my acquaintance, who, when somewhere about the ripe age of eleven, conjured his mother "*not* to come to see him until she had got her new carriage, lest he should be quizzed by the rest of the men," was perhaps no unfair representative of the mass of his school-fellows. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. The sons of the old nobility, too much accustomed to splendour in its grander forms, and too sure of their own station to care about such matters, and the few finer spirits, whose ambition even in boyhood soars to far higher and holier aims, are, generally speaking, alike exempt from these vulgar cravings after petty distinctions. And for the rest of the small people, why "winter and rough weather," and that most excellent schoolmaster, the world, will not fail, sooner or later, to bring them to wiser thoughts.

In the meanwhile, as according to our homely proverb, "for every gander there's a goose," so there are not wanting in London and its environs "establishments," (the good old name of boarding-school being altogether done away with,) where young ladies are trained up in a love of fashion and finery, and a reverence for the outward symbols of wealth, which cannot fail to render them worthy compeers of the young gentlemen their contemporaries. I have known a little girl, (fit mate for the above-mentioned amateur of new carriages,) who complained that *her* mamma called upon her, attended only by one footman; and it is certain, that the position of a newcomer in one of these houses of education will not fail to be materially influenced by such considerations as the situation of her father's town residence, or the name of her mother's milliner. At so early a period does the exclusiveness which more or less pervades the whole current of English society make its appearance amongst our female youth.

Even in the comparatively rational and old-fashioned seminary in which I was brought up, we were not quite free from these vanities. We, too, had our high castes and our low castes, and (alas! for her and for ourselves!) we counted among our number one who in her loneliness and desolation might almost be called a Pariah — or if that be too strong an illustration, who was at least, in more senses than one, the Cinderella of the school.

Honor O'Callaghan was, as her name imports, an Irish girl. She had been placed under the care of Mrs. Sherwood before she was five years old, her father being designated, in an introductory letter which he brought in his hand, as a barrister from Dublin, of ancient family, of considerable ability, and the very highest honour. The friend, however, who had given him this excellent character, had, unfortunately, died a very short time after poor Honor's arrival; and of Mr. O'Callaghan, nothing had ever been heard after the first half-year, when he sent the amount of the bill in a draft, which, when due, proved to be dishonoured. The worst part of this communication, however unsatisfactory in its nature, was; that it was final. All inquiries, whether in Dublin or elsewhere, proved unavailing; Mr. O'Callaghan had disappeared; our unlucky governante found herself saddled with the board, clothing, and education, the present care, and future destiny, of a little girl, for whom she felt about as much affection as was felt by the overseers of Aberleigh towards their involuntary protegé, Jesse Cliffe. Nay, in saying this, I am probably giving our worthy governess credit for somewhat milder feelings upon this subject than she actually entertained; the overseers in question, accustomed to such circumstances, harbouring no stronger sentiment than a cold, passive indifference towards the parish boy, whilst she, good sort of woman as in general she was, did certainly upon this occasion cherish something very like an active aversion to the little intruder.

The fact is, that Mrs. Sherwood, who had been much captivated by Mr. O'Callaghan's showy, off-hand manner, his civilities, and his flatteries, felt, for the first time in her life, that she had been taken in; and being a peculiarly prudent, cautious personage, of the slow, sluggish, stagnant temperament, which those who possess it are apt to account a virtue, and to hold in scorn their more excitable and impressible neighbours, found herself touched in the very point of honour, piqued, aggrieved, mortified; and denouncing the father as the greatest deceiver that ever trod the earth, could not help transferring some part of her hatred to the innocent child. She was really a good sort of woman, as I have said before, and every now and then her conscience twitched her, and she struggled hard to seem kind and to be so: but it would not do. There the feeling was, and the more she struggled against it, the stronger, I verily believe, it became.

Trying to conquer a deep-rooted aversion, is something like trampling upon camomile: the harder you tread it down the more it flourishes.

Under these evil auspices, the poor little Irish girl grew up amongst us. Not ill-used certainly, for she was fed and taught as we were; and some forty shillings a year more expended upon the trifles, gloves, and shoes, and ribbons, which make the difference between nicety and shabbiness in female dress, would have brought her apparel upon an equality with ours. Ill-used she was not; to be sure, teachers and masters seemed to consider it a duty to reprimand her for such faults as would have passed unnoticed in another; and if there were any noise amongst us, she, by far the quietest and most silent person in the house, was, as a matter of course, accused of making it. Still she was not what would be commonly called ill-treated; although her young heart was withered and blighted, and her spirit crushed and broken by the chilling indifference, or the harsh unkindness which surrounded her on every side.

Nothing, indeed, could come in stronger contrast than the position of the young Irish girl, and that of her English companions. A stranger, almost a foreigner amongst us, with no home but that great school-room; no comforts, no indulgences, no knick-knacks, no money, nothing but the sheer, bare, naked necessaries of a school-girl's life; no dear family to think of and to go to; no fond father to come to see her; no brothers and sisters; no kindred; no friends. It was a loneliness, a desolation, which, especially at breaking-up times, when all her school-fellows went joyfully away each to her happy home, and she was left the solitary and neglected inhabitant of the deserted mansion, must have pressed upon her very heart. The heaviest tasks of the half-year must have been pleasure and enjoyment compared with the dreariness of those lonesome holidays.

And yet she was almost as lonely when we were all assembled. Childhood is, for the most part, generous and sympathising; and there were many amongst us who, interested by her deserted situation, would have been her friends. But Honor was one of those flowers which will only open in the bright sunshine. Never did marigold under a cloudy sky shut up her heart more closely than Honor O'Callaghan. In a word, Honor had really one of the many faults ascribed to her by Mrs. Sherwood, and her teachers, and masters—that fault so natural and so pardonable in adversity—she was proud.

National and family pride blended with the personal feeling. Young as she was when she left Ireland, she had caught from the old nurse who had had the care of her infancy, rude legends of the ancient greatness of her country, and of the regal grandeur of the O'Connors, her maternal ancestors; and over such dim traces of Cathleen's legends as floated in her memory, fragments wild, shadowy, and indistinct, as the recollections of a dream, did the poor Irish girl love to brood. Visions of long-past splendour possessed her wholly, and the half-unconscious reveries in which she had the habit of indulging, gave a tinge of romance and enthusiasm to her character, as peculiar as her story.

Everything connected with her country had for her an indescribable charm. It was wonderful how, with the apparently scanty means of acquiring knowledge which the common school histories afforded, together with here and there a stray book borrowed for her by her young companions from their home libraries, and questions answered from the same source, she had contrived to collect her abundant and accurate information, as to its early annals and present position. Her antiquarian lore was perhaps a little tinged, as such antiquarianism is apt to be, by the colouring of a warm imagination; but still it was a remarkable exemplification of the power of an ardent mind to ascertain and combine facts upon a favourite subject under apparently insuperable difficulties. Unless in pursuing her historical inquiries, she did not often speak upon the subject. Her enthusiasm was too deep and too concentrated for words. But she was Irish to the heart's core, and had even retained, one can hardly tell how, the slight accent which in a sweet-toned female voice is so pretty.

In her appearance, also, there were many of the characteristics of her country women. The roundness of form and clearness of complexion, the result of good nurture and pure blood which are often found in those who have been nursed in an Irish cabin, the abundant wavy hair and the deep-set grey eye. The face, in spite of some irregularity of feature, would have been pretty, decidedly pretty, if the owner had been happy; but the expression was too abstracted, too thoughtful, too melancholy for childhood or even for youth. She was like a rose, shut up in a room, whose pale blossoms have hardly felt the touch of the glorious sunshine or the blessed air. A daisy of the field, a common, simple, cheerful-looking daisy, would be pleasanter to gaze upon than the blighted queen of flowers.

Her figure was, however, decidedly beautiful. Not merely tall, but pliant, elastic, and graceful in no ordinary degree. She was not generally remarkable for accomplishment. How could she, in the total absence of the most powerful, as well as the most amiable motives to exertion? She had no one to please; no one to watch her progress, to rejoice in her success, to lament her failure. In many branches of education she had not advanced beyond mediocrity, but her dancing was perfection; or rather it would have been so, if to her other graces she had added the

charm of gaiety. But that want, as our French dancing-master used to observe, was so universal in this country, that the wonder would have been to see any young lady, whose face in a cotillion (for it was before the days of quadrilles) did not look as if she was following a funeral.

Such at thirteen I found Honor O'Callaghan, when I, a damsel some three years younger, was first placed at Mrs. Sherwood's; such five years afterwards I left her, when I quitted the school.

Calling there the following spring, accompanied by my good godfather, we again saw Honor silent and pensive as ever. The old gentleman was much struck with her figure and her melancholy. "Fine girl that!" observed he to me: "looks as if she was in love though," added he, putting his finger to his nose with a knowing nod, as was usual with him upon occasions of that kind. I, for my part, in whom a passion for literature was just beginning to develope itself, had a theory of my own upon the subject, and regarded her with unwonted respect in consequence. Her abstraction appeared to me exactly that of an author when contemplating some great work, and I had no doubt but she would turn out a poetess. Both conjectures were characteristic, and both, as it happened, wrong.

Upon my next visit to London, I found that a great change had happened in Honor's destiny. Her father, whom she had been fond of investing with the dignity of a rebel, but who had, according to Mrs. Sherwood's more reasonable suspicion, been a reckless, extravagant, thoughtless person, whose follies had been visited upon himself and his family, with the evil consequences of crimes, had died in America; and his sister, the richly-jointured widow of a baronet, of old Milesian blood, who during his life had been inexorable to his entreaties to befriend the poor girl, left as it were in pledge at a London boarding-school, had relented upon hearing of his death, had come to England, settled all pecuniary matters to the full satisfaction of the astonished and delighted governess, and finally carried Honor back with her to Dublin.

From this time we lost sight altogether of our old companion. With her school-fellows she had never formed even the common school intimacies, and to Mrs. Sherwood and her functionaries she owed no obligation except that of money, which was now discharged. The only debt of gratitude which she had ever acknowledged, was to the old French teacher, who, although she never got nearer the pronunciation or the orthography of her name than Mademoiselle l'Ocalle, had yet, in the overflowing benevolence of her temper, taken such notice of the deserted child, as amidst the general neglect might pass for kindness. But she had returned to France. For no one else did Honor profess the slightest interest. Accordingly, she left the house where she had passed nearly all her life, without expressing any desire to hear again of its inmates, and never wrote a line to any of them.

We did hear of her, however, occasionally. Rumours reached us, vague and distant, and more conflicting even than distant rumours are wont to be. She was distinguished at the vice-regal court, a beauty and a wit; she was married to a nobleman of the highest rank; she was a nun of the order of Mercy; she was dead.

And as years glided on, as the old school passed into other hands, and the band of youthful companions became more and more dispersed, one of the latter opinions began to gain ground among us, when two or three chanced to meet, and to talk of old school-fellows. If she had been alive and in the great world, surely some of us should have heard of her. Her having been a Catholic, rendered her taking the veil not improbable; and to a person of her enthusiastic temper, the duties of the sisters of Mercy would have peculiar charms.

As one of that most useful and most benevolent order, or as actually dead, we were therefore content to consider her, until, in the lapse of years and the changes of destiny, we had ceased to think of her at all.

The second of this present month of May was a busy and a noisy day in my garden. All the world knows what a spring this has been. The famous black spring commemorated by Gilbert White can hardly have been more thoroughly ungenial, more fatal to man or beast, to leaf and flower, than this most miserable season, this winter of long days, when the sun shines as if in mockery, giving little more heat than his cold sister the moon, and the bitter north-east produces at one and the same moment the incongruous annoyances of biting cold and suffocating dust. Never was such a season. The swallows, nightingales, and cuckoos, were a fortnight after their usual time. I wonder what they thought of it, pretty creatures, and how they made up their minds to come at all!—and the sloe blossom, the black thorn winter as the common people call it, which generally makes its appearance early in March, along with the first violets, did not whiten the hedges this year until full two months later.* In short, everybody knows that this has been a most villanous season, and deserves all the ill that can

*It is extraordinary, how some flowers seem to obey the season, whilst others are influenced by the weather. The hawthorn, certainly nearly akin to the sloe blossoms, is this year rather forwarder, if anything, than in common years; and the fritillary, always a May flower, is painting the water meadows at this moment in company with "the blackthorn winter;" or rather is nearly over, whilst its cousin-german, the tulip, is scarcely showing for bloom in the warmest exposures and most sheltered borders of the garden.

possibly be said of it. But the second of May held forth a promise which, according to a very usual trick of English weather, it has not kept; and was so mild and smiling and gracious, that, without being quite so foolish as to indulge in any romantic and visionary expectation of ever seeing summer again, we were yet silly enough to be cheered by the thought that spring was coming at last in good earnest.

In a word, it was that pleasant rarity a fine day; and it was also a day of considerable stir, as I shall attempt to describe hereafter, in my small territories.

In the street too, and in the house, there was as much noise and bustle as one would well desire to hear in our village.

The first of May is Belford Great Fair, where horses and cows are sold, and men meet gravely to transact grave business; and the second of May is Belford Little Fair, where boys and girls of all ages, women and children of all ranks, flock into the town, to buy ribbons and dolls and balls and gingerbread, to eat cakes and suck oranges, to stare at the shows, and gaze at the wild beasts, and to follow merrily the merry business called pleasure.

Carts and carriages, horse-people and foot-people, were flocking to the fair; unsold cows and horses, with their weary drivers, and labouring men who, having made a night as well as a day of it, began to think it time to find their way home, were coming from it; Punch was being exhibited at one end of the street, a barrel-organ, surmounted by a most accomplished monkey, was playing at the other; a half-tipsy horse-dealer was galloping up and down the road, showing off an unbroken forest pony, who threatened every moment to throw him and break his neck; a hawker was walking up the street crying Greenacre's last dying speech, who was hanged that morning at Newgate, and as all the world knows, made none; and the highway in front of our house was well-nigh blocked up by three or four carriages waiting for different sets of visiters, and by a gang of gipsies who stood clustered round the gate, waiting with great anxiety the issue of an investigation going on in the hall, where one of their gang was under examination upon a question of stealing a goose. Witnesses, constables, and other officials were loitering in the court, and dogs were barking, women chattering, boys blowing horns, and babies squalling through all. It was as pretty a scene of crowd and din and bustle as one shall see in a summer's day. The fair itself was calm and quiet in comparison; the complication of discordant sounds in Hogarth's Enraged Musician was nothing to it.

Within my garden the genius of noise was equally triumphant. An ingenious device, contrived and executed by a most kind and ingenious friend, for the purpose of sheltering the pyramid of geraniums in front of my greenhouse, — consisting of a wooden roof, drawn by pulleys up and down a high, strong post, something like the mast of a ship,* had given way; and another most kind friend had arrived with the requisite machinery, blocks and ropes, and tackle of all sorts, to replace it upon an improved construction. With him came a tall blacksmith, a short carpenter, and a stout collar-maker, with hammers, nails, chisels, and tools of all sorts, enough to build a house; ladders of all heights and sizes, two or three gaping apprentices, who stood about in the way, John willing to lend his aid in behalf of his flowers, and master Dick with his hands in his pockets looking on. The short carpenter perched himself upon one ladder, the tall blacksmith on another; my good friend, Mr. Lawson, mounted to the mast-head; and such a clatter ensued of hammers and voices —(for it was exactly one of those fancy jobs where every one feels privileged to advise and find fault)—such clashing of opinions and conceptions and suggestions as would go to the building a county town.

Whilst this was going forward in middle air, I and my company were doing our best to furnish forth the chorus below. It so happened that two sets of my visiters were scientific botanists, the one party holding the Linnæan system, the others disciples of Jussieu; and the garden being a most natural place for such a discussion, a war of hard words ensued, which would have done honour to the Tower of Babel. "Tetradynamia," exclaimed one set; "Monocotyledones," thundered the other; whilst a third friend, a skilful florist, but no botanist, unconsciously out-long-worded both of them, by telling me that the name of a new annual was "Leptosiphon androsaceus."

Never was such a confusion of noises! The house door opened, and my father's strong clear voice was heard in tones of warning. "Woman, how can you swear to this goose?" Whilst the respondent squeaked out in something between a scream and a cry, "Please your worship, the poor bird having a-laid all his eggs, we had marked un, and so—" What farther she would have said being drowned in a prodigious clatter occasioned by the downfall of the ladder that supported the tall blacksmith, which, striking against that whereon was placed the short carpenter, overset that climbing machine also, and the clamour inci-

*This description does not sound prettily, but the real effect is exceedingly graceful: the appearance of the dark canopy suspended over the pile of bright flowers at a considerable height, has something about it not merely picturesque but oriental; and that a gentleman's contrivance should succeed at all points, as if he had been a real carpenter, instead of an earl's son and a captain in the navy, is a fact quite unparalleled in the annals of invention.

dent to such a calamity overpowered all minor noises.

In the meanwhile I became aware that a fourth party of visiters had entered the garden, my excellent neighbour, Miss Mortimer, and three other ladies, whom she introduced as Mrs. and the Misses Dobbs; and the botanists and florists having departed, and the disaster at the mast being repaired, quiet was so far restored, that I ushered my guests into the greenhouse, with something like a hope that we should be able to hear each other speak.

Mrs. Dobbs was about the largest woman I had ever seen in my life, fat, fair, and *fifty*, with a broad rosy countenance, beaming with good-humour and contentment, and with a general look of affluence over her whole comfortable person. She spoke in a loud voice which made itself heard over the remaining din in the garden and out, and with a patois between Scotch and Irish, which puzzled me, until I found from her discourse that she was the widow of a linen manufacturer, in the neighbourhood of Belfast.

"Ay," quoth she, with the most open-hearted familiarity, "times are changed for the better with me since you and I parted in Cadogan Place. Poor Mr. Dobbs left me and those two girls a fortune of——— Why, I verily believe," continued she, interrupting herself, "that you don't know me!"

"Honor!" said one of the young ladies to the other, "only look at this butterfly!"

Honor! Was it, could it be, Honor O'Callaghan, the slight, pale, romantic visionary, so proud, so reserved, so abstracted, so elegant, and so melancholy? Had thirty years of the coarse realities of life transformed that pensive and delicate damsel into the comely, hearty, and to say the truth, somewhat vulgar dame whom I saw before me? Was such a change possible?

"Married a nobleman!" exclaimed she when I told her the reports respecting herself. "Taken the veil! No, indeed! I have been a far humbler and happier woman. It is very strange, though, that during my Cinderella-like life at school, I used always in my day-dreams to make my story end like that of the heroine of the fairy tale; and it is still stranger, that both rumours were within a very little of coming true,—for when I got to Ireland, which, so far as I was concerned, turned out a very different place from what I expected, I found myself shut up in an old castle, fifty times more dreary and melancholy than ever was our great school-room in the holidays, with my aunt setting her heart upon marrying me to an old lord, who might, for age and infirmities, have passed for my great-grandfather; and I really, in my perplexity, had serious thoughts of turning nun to get rid of my suitor; but then I was allowed to go into the north upon a visit, and fell in with my late excellent husband, who obtained Lady O'Hara's consent to the match by the offer of taking me without a portion; and ever since," continued she, "I have been a very common-place and a very happy woman. Mr. Dobbs was a man who had made his own fortune, and all he asked of me was, to lay aside my airs and graces, and live with him in his own homely, old-fashioned way amongst his own old people, (kind people they were!) his looms, and his bleaching-grounds; so that my heart was opened, and I grew fat and comfortable, and merry and hearty, as different from the foolish, romantic girl whom you remember, as plain honest prose is from the silly thing called poetry. I don't believe that I have ever once thought of my old castles in the air for these five-and-twenty years. It is very odd, though," added she, with a frankness which was really like thinking aloud, "that I always did contrive in my visions that my history should conclude like that of Cinderella. To be sure, things are much better as they are, but it is an odd thing, nevertheless. Well! perhaps my daughters . . . . !"

And as they are rich and pretty, and good-natured, although much more in the style of the present Honor than the past, it is by no means improbable that the vision which was evidently glittering before the fond mother's eyes, may be realized. At all events, my old friend is, as she says herself, a happy woman—in all probability, happier than if the Cinderella day-dream had actually come to pass in her own comely person. But the transition! After all, there are rural transformations in this every-day world, which beat the doings of fairy-land all to nothing; and the change of the pumpkin into a chariot, and the mice into horses, was not to be compared for a moment with the transmogrification of Honor O'Callaghan into Mrs. Dobbs.

AUNT DEBORAH.

A CROSSER old woman than Mrs. Deborah Thornby was certainly not to be found in the whole village of Hilton. Worth, in country phrase, a power of money, and living (to borrow another rustic expression) upon her means, the exercise of her extraordinary faculty for grumbling and scolding seemed the sole occupation of her existence, her only pursuit, solace, and amusement; and really it would have been a great pity to have deprived the poor woman of a pastime so consolatory to herself, and which did harm to nobody: her family consisting only of an old labourer, to guard the house, take care of her horse, her cow, and her chaise and cart, and work in the garden, who was, happily for his comfort, stone deaf, and could not hear her vituperation, and of a parish girl of twelve, to do the indoor work, who had been so used to be scold-

ed all her life, that she minded the noise no more than a miller minds the clack of his mill, or than people who live in a churchyard mind the sound of the church-bells, and would probably, from long habit, have felt some miss of the sound had it ceased, of which, by the way, there was small danger, so long as Mrs. Deborah continued in this life. Her crossness was so far innocent that it hurt nobody except herself. But she was also cross-grained, and that evil quality is unluckily apt to injure other people; and did so very materially in the present instance.

Mrs. Deborah was the only daughter of old Simon Thornby, of Chalcott great farm; she had had one brother, who having married the rosy-cheeked daughter of the parish clerk, a girl with no portion except her modesty, her good-nature, and her prettiness, had been discarded by his father, and after trying various ways to gain a living, and failing in all, had finally died broken-hearted, leaving the unfortunate clerk's daughter, rosy-cheeked no longer, and one little boy, to the tender mercy of his family. Old Simon showed none. He drove his son's widow from the door as he had before driven off his son; and when he also died, an event which occurred within a year or two, bequeathed all his property to his daughter Deborah.

This bequest was exceedingly agreeable to Mrs. Deborah, (for she was already of an age to assume that title,) who valued money, not certainly for the comforts and luxuries which it may be the means of procuring, nor even for its own sake, as the phrase goes, but for that which, to a woman of her temper, was perhaps the highest that she was capable of enjoying, the power which wealth confers over all who are connected with or dependent on its possessor.

The principal subjects of her despotic dominion were the young widow and her boy, whom she placed in a cottage near her own house, and with whose comfort and happiness she dallied pretty much as a cat plays with the mouse which she has got into her clutches, and lets go only to catch again, or an angler with the trout which he has fairly hooked, and merely suffers to struggle in the stream until it is sufficiently exhausted to bring to land. She did not mean to be cruel, but she could not help it; so her poor mice were mocked with the semblance of liberty, although surrounded by restraints; and the awful paw seemingly sheathed in velvet, whilst they were in reality never out of reach of the horrors of the pat.

It sometimes, however, happens that the little mouse makes her escape from madam pussy at the very moment when she seems to have the unlucky trembler actually within her claws; and so it occurred in the present instance.

The dwelling to which Mrs. Deborah retired after the death of her father, was exceedingly romantic and beautiful in point of situation. It was a small but picturesque farm-house, on the very banks of the Loddon, a small branch of which, diverging from the parent stream, and crossed by a pretty foot-bridge, swept round the homestead, the orchard and garden, and went winding along the water meadows in a thousand glittering meanders, until it was lost in the rich woodlands which formed the back-ground of the picture. In the month of May, when the orchard was full of its rosy and pearly blossoms, a forest of lovely bloom, the meadows yellow with cowslips, and the clear brimming river, bordered by the golden tufts of the water ranunculus, and garlanded by the snowy flowers of the hawthorn and the wild-cherry, the thin wreath of smoke curling from the tall, old-fashioned chimneys of the pretty irregular building, with its porch, and its bay-windows, and gable-ends full of light and shadow,—in that month of beauty it would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful or a more English landscape.

On the other side of the narrow winding road, parted from Mrs. Deborah's demesne by a long low bridge of many arches, stood a little rustic mill, and its small low-browed cottage, with its own varied back-ground of garden and fruit-trees and thickly-wooded meadows, extending in long perspective, a smiling verdant valley of many miles.

Now Chalcott mill, reckoned by everybody else the prettiest point in her prospect, was to Mrs. Deborah not merely an eye-sore, but a heart-sore, not on its own account; cantankerous as she was, she had no quarrel with the innocent buildings, but for the sake of its inhabitants.

Honest John Stokes, the miller, was her cousin-german. People did say that some forty years before there had been question of a marriage between the parties; and really they both denied the thing with so much vehemence and fury, that one should almost be tempted to believe there was some truth in the report. Certain it is, that if they had been that wretched thing a mismatched couple, and had gone on snarling together all their lives, they could not have hated each other more zealously. One shall not often meet with anything so perfect in its way as that aversion. It was none of your silent hatreds that never come to words; nor of your civil hatreds, that veil themselves under smooth phrases and smiling looks. Their ill-will was frank, open, and above-board. They could not afford to come to an absolute breach, because it would have deprived them of the pleasure of quarrelling; and in spite of the frequent complaints they were wont to make of their near neighbourhood, I am convinced that they derived no small gratification from the opportunities which it afforded them of saying disagreeable things to each other.

And yet Mr. John Stokes was a well-meaning man, and Mrs. Deborah Thornby was not an ill-meaning woman. But she was, as I have said before, cross in the grain; and he—why he was one of those plain-dealing personages who will speak their whole mind, and who pique themselves upon that sort of sincerity which is comprised in telling to another all the ill that they have ever heard, or thought, or imagined concerning him, in repeating as if it were a point of duty, all the harm that one neighbour says of another, and in denouncing, as if it were a sin, whatever the unlucky person whom they address may happen to do, or to leave undone.

"I am none of your palavering chaps, to flummer over an old vixen for the sake of her strong-box. I hate such falseness. I speak the truth and care for no man," quoth John Stokes.

And accordingly John Stokes never saw Mrs. Deborah Thornby but he saluted her, pretty much as his mastiff accosted her favourite cat; erected his bristles, looked at her with savage, bloodshot eyes, showed his teeth, and vented a sound something between a snarl and a growl; whilst she, (like the four-footed tabby,) set up her back and spit at him in return.

They met often, as I have said, for the enjoyment of quarrelling; and as whatever he advised she was pretty sure *not* to do, it is probable that his remonstrances in favour of her friendless relations served to confirm her in the small tyranny which she exercised towards them.

Such being the state of feeling between these two jangling cousins, it may be imagined with what indignation Mrs. Deborah found John Stokes, upon the death of his wife, removing her widowed sister-in-law from the cottage in which she had placed her, and bringing her home to the mill, to officiate as his housekeeper, and take charge of a lovely little girl, his only child. She vowed one of those vows of anger which I fear are oftener kept than the vows of love, to strike both mother and son out of her will, (by the way, she had a superstitious horror of that disagreeable ceremony, and even the temptation of choosing new legatees whenever the old displeased her, had not been sufficient to induce her to make one,—the threat did as well,) and never to speak to either of them again as long as she lived.

She proclaimed this resolution at the rate of twelve times an hour, (that is to say, once in five minutes,) every day for a fortnight; and in spite of her well-known caprice, there seemed for once in her life reason to believe that she would keep her word.

Those prudent and sagacious persons who are so good as to take the superintendence of other people's affairs, and to tell by the look of the foot where the shoe pinches and where it does not, all united in blaming the poor widow for withdrawing herself and her son from Mrs. Deborah's protection. But besides that no human being can adequately estimate the misery of leading a life of dependence upon one to whom scolding was as the air she breathed, without it she must die, a penurious dependence too, which supplied grudgingly the humblest wants, and yet would not permit the exertions by which she would joyfully have endeavoured to support herself;—besides the temptation to exchange Mrs. Deborah's incessant maundering for the miller's rough kindness, and her scanty fare for the coarse plenty of his board,—besides these homely but natural temptations—hardly to be adequately allowed for by those who have passed their lives amidst smiling kindness and luxurious abundance; besides these motives she had a stronger and dearer in her desire to rescue her boy from the dangers of an enforced and miserable idleness, and to put him in the way of earning his bread by honest industry.

Through the interest of his grandfather the parish clerk, the little Edward had been early placed in the Hilton free school, where he had acquitted himself so much to the satisfaction of the master, that at twelve years old he was the head boy on the foundation, and took precedence of the other nine-and-twenty wearers of the full-skirted blue coats, leathern belts, and tasseled caps, in the various arts of reading, writing, cyphering, and mensuration. He could flourish a swan without ever taking his pen from the paper. Nay, there is little doubt but from long habit he could have flourished it blindfold, like the man who had so often modelled the wit of Ferney in breadcrums, that he could produce little busts of Voltaire with his hands under the table; he had not his equal in Practice or the Rule of Three, and his piece, when sent round at Christmas, was the admiration of the whole parish.

Unfortunately, his arrival at this pre-eminence was also the signal of his dismissal from the free school. He returned home to his mother, and as Mrs. Deborah, although hourly complaining of the expense of supporting a great lubberly boy in idleness, refused to apprentice him to any trade, and even forbade his finding employment in helping her deaf man of all work to cultivate her garden, which the poor lad, naturally industrious and active, begged her permission to do, his mother, considering that no uncertain expectations of money at the death of his kinswoman could counterbalance the certain evil of dragging on his days in penury and indolence during her life, wisely determined to betake herself to the mill, and accept John Stokes's offer of sending Edward to a friend in town, for the purpose of being placed with a civil engineer:—a destination with which the boy himself—a fine intelligent youth, by the way, tall and

manly, with black eyes that talked and laughed, and curling dark hair,—was delighted in every point of view. He longed for a profession for which he had a decided turn; he longed to see the world as personified by the city of cities, the unparagoned London; and he longed more than either to get away from Aunt Deborah, the storm of whose vituperation seemed ringing in his ears so long as he continued within sight of her dwelling. One would think the clack of the mill and the prattle of his pretty cousin Cicely might have drowned it, but it did not. Nothing short of leaving the spinster fifty miles behind, and setting the great city between him and her, could efface the impression.

"I hope I am not ungrateful," thought Edward to himself, as he was trudging Londonward after taking a tender leave of all at the mill; "I hope I am not ungrateful. I do not think I am, for I would give my right arm, ay, or my life, if it would serve master John Stokes or please dear Cissy. But really I do hope never to come within hearing of Aunt Deborah again, she storms so. I wonder whether all old women are so cross. I don't think my mother will be, nor Cissy. I am sure Cissy won't. Poor aunt Deborah! I suppose she can't help it." And with this indulgent conclusion, Edward wended on his way.

Aunt Deborah's mood was by no means so pacific. She staid at home fretting, fuming, and chafing, and storming herself hoarse—which, as the people at the mill took care to keep out of earshot, was all so much good scolding thrown away. The state of things since Edward's departure had been so decisive, that even John Stokes thought it wiser to keep himself aloof for a time; and although they pretty well guessed that she would take measures to put in effect her threat of disinheritance, the first outward demonstration came in the shape of a young man (gentleman I suppose he called himself—ay, there is no doubt but he wrote himself Esquire) who attended her to church a few Sundays after, and was admitted to the honour of sitting in the same pew.

Nothing could be more unlike our friend Edward than the stranger. Fair, freckled, light-haired, light-eyed, with invisible eyebrows and eye-lashes, insignificant in feature, pert and perking in expression, and in figure so dwarfed and stunted, that though in point of age he had evidently attained his full growth, (if one may use the expression to such a he-doll,) Robert at fifteen would have made two of him,—such was the new favourite. So far as appearance went, for certain Mrs. Deborah had not changed for the better.

Gradually it oozed out, as, somehow or other, news, like water, will find a vent, however small the cranny,—by slow degrees it came to be understood that Mrs. Deborah's visiter was a certain Mr. Adolphus Lynfield, clerk to an attorney of no great note in the good town of Belford Regis, and nearly related, as he affirmed, to the Thornby family.

Upon hearing these tidings, John Stokes, the son of old Simon Thornby's sister, marched across the road, and finding the door upon the latch, entered unannounced into the presence of his enemy.

"I think it my duty to let you know, cousin Deborah, that this here chap 's an impostor—a sham—and that you are a fool," was his conciliatory opening. "Search the register. The Thornbys have been yeomen of this parish ever since the time of Elizabeth—more shame to you for forcing the last of the race to seek his bread elsewhere; and if you can find such a name as Lynfield amongst 'em I 'll give you leave to turn me into a pettifogging lawyer—that 's all. Saunderses, and Symondses, and Stokeses, and Mays, you 'll find in plenty, but never a Lynfield. Lynfield, quotha! it sounds like a made-up name in a story-book! And as for 'Dolphus, why there never was anything like it in all the generation, except my good old great-aunt Dolly, and that stood for Dorothy. All our names have been christian-like and English, Toms, and Jacks, and Jems, and Bills, and Sams, and Neds—poor fellow! None of your outlandish 'Dolphuses. Dang it, I believe the foolish woman likes the chap the better for having a name she can't speak! Remember, I warn you he 's a sham!" And off strode the honest miller, leaving Mrs. Deborah too angry for reply, and confirmed both in her prejudice and prepossession by the natural effect of that spirit of contradiction which formed so large an ingredient in her composition, and was not wholly wanting in that of John Stokes.

Years passed away, and in spite of frequent ebbs and flows, the tide of Mrs. Deborah's favour continued to set towards Mr. Adolphus Lynfield. Once or twice indeed, report had said that he was fairly discarded, but the very appearance of the good miller, anxious to improve the opportunity for his protégé, had been sufficient to determine his cousin to reinstate Mr. Adolphus in her good graces. Whether she really liked him is doubtful. He entertained too good an opinion of himself to be very successful in gaining that of other people.

That the gentleman was not deficient in "left-handed wisdom," was proved pretty clearly by most of his actions; for instance, when routed by the downright miller from the position which he had taken up of a near kinsman by the father's side, he, like an able tactician, wheeled about and called cousins with Mrs. Deborah's mother; and as that good lady happened to have borne the very general, almost universal, name of Smith, which is next to anonymous, even John Stokes

could not dislodge him from that entrenchment. But he was not always so dexterous. Cunning in him lacked the crowning perfection of hiding itself under the appearance of honesty. His art never looked like nature. It stared you in the face, and could not deceive the dullest observer. His very flattery had a tone of falseness that affronted the person flattered; and Mrs. Deborah, in particular, who did not want for shrewdness, found it so distasteful, that she would certainly have discarded him upon that one ground of offence, had not her love of power been unconsciously propitiated by the perception of the efforts which he made, and the degradation to which he submitted, in the vain attempt to please her. She liked the homage offered to "*les beaux yeux de sa cassette*," pretty much as a young beauty likes the devotion extorted by her charms, and for the sake of the incense tolerated the worshipper.

Nevertheless there were moments when the conceit which I have mentioned as the leading characteristic of Mr. Adolphus Lynfield had well-nigh banished him from Chalcott. Piquing himself on the variety and extent of his knowledge, the universality of his genius, he of course paid the penalty of other universal geniuses, by being in no small degree superficial. Not content with understanding every trade better than those who had followed it all their lives, he had a most unlucky propensity to put his devices into execution, and as his information was, for the most part, picked up from the column headed "varieties," in the county newspaper, where of course there is some chaff mingled with the grain, and as the figments in question were generally understood and imperfectly recollected, it is really surprising that the young gentleman did not occasion more mischief than actually occurred by the quips and quiddities which he delighted to put in practice whenever he met with any one simple enough to permit the exercise of his talents.

Some damage he did effect by his experiments, as Mrs. Deborah found to her cost. He killed a bed of old-fashioned spice cloves, the pride of her heart, by salting the ground to get rid of the worms. Her broods of geese also, and of turkeys, fell victims to a new and infallible mode of feeding, which was to make them twice as fat in half the time. Somehow or other, they all died under the operation. So did half a score of fine apple-trees, under an improved method of grafting; whilst a magnificent brown Bury pear, that covered one end of the house, perished of the grand discovery of severing the bark to increase the crop. He lamed Mrs. Deborah's old horse by doctoring him for a prick in shoeing, and ruined her favourite cow, the best milch cow in the county, by a most needless attempt to increase her milk.

Now these mischances and misdemeanours, ay, or the half of them, would undoubtedly have occasioned Mr. Adolphus's dismission, and the recall of poor Edward, every account of whom was in the highest degree favourable, had the worthy miller been able to refrain from lecturing his cousin upon her neglect of the one, and her partiality for the other. It was really astonishing that John Stokes, a man of sagacity in all other respects, never could understand that scolding was of all devisable processes the least likely to succeed in carrying his point with one who was such a proficient in that accomplishment, that if the old penalty for female scolds, the ducking-stool, had continued in fashion, she would have stood an excellent chance of attaining to that distinction. But so it was. The same blood coursed through their veins, and his tempestuous good-will and her fiery anger took the same form of violence and passion.

Nothing but these lectures *could* have kept Mrs. Deborah constant in the train of such a trumpery, jiggeting, fidgety little personage as Mr. Adolphus,—the more especially as her heart was assailed in its better and softer parts, by the quiet respectfulness of Mrs. Thornby's demeanour, who never forgot that she had experienced her protection in the hour of need, and by the irresistible good-nature of Cicely, a smiling, rosy, sunny-looking creature, whose only vocation in this world seemed to be the trying to make everybody as happy as herself.

Mrs. Deborah (with such a humanizing taste, she could not, in spite of her cantankerous temper, be all bad) loved flowers: and Cicely, a rover of the woods and fields from early childhood, and no despicable practical gardener, took care to keep her beaupots constantly supplied from the first snowdrop to the last china-rose. Nothing was too large for Cicely's good-will, nothing too small. Huge chimney jars of lilacs, laburnums, horse-chestnuts, peonies, and the golden and gorgeous double-furze; china jugs filled with magnificent double stocks, and rich wallflowers,* with their bitter-sweet odour, like the taste of orange marmalade, pinks, sweet-peas, and

* Few flowers, (and almost all look best when arranged each sort in its separate vase,)—few look so well together as the four sorts of double wallflowers. The common dark, (the old bloody warrior—I have a love for those graphic names—words which paint) the common dark, the common yellow, the newer and more intensely coloured dark, and that new golp colour still so rare, which is in tint, form, growth, hardiness, and profusion, one of the most valuable acquisitions to the flower-garden. When placed together in a jar, the brighter blossoms seem to stand out from those of deeper hue, with exactly the sort of relief, the harmonious combination of light and shade, that one sometimes sees in the rich gilt carving of an old flower-wreathed picture-frame; or, better still, it might seem a pot of flowers chased in gold, by Benvenuto Cellini, in which the workmanship outvalued the metal. Many beaupots are gayer, many sweeter, but this is the richest, both for scent and colour, that I have ever seen.

mignonette, from her own little garden, or woodland posies that might beseem the hand of the faerie queen, composed of those gems of flowers, the scarlet pimpernel, and the blue anagallis, the rosy star of the wild geranium, with its aromatic crimson-tipped leaves, the snowy star of the white ochil, and that third starry flower the yellow loose-strife, the milk vetch, purple, or pink, or cream coloured, backed by moss-like leaves and lilac blossoms of the lousewort, and overhung by the fragrant bells and cool green leaves of the lily of the valley. It would puzzle the gardener to surpass the elegance and delicacy of such a nosegay.

Offerings like these did our miller's maiden delight to bring at all seasons, and under all circumstances, whether of peace or war between the heads of the two opposite houses; and whenever there chanced to be a lull in the storm, she availed herself of the opportunity to add to her simple tribute a dish of eels from the mill-stream, or perch from the river.—That the thought of Edward ("dear Edward," as she always called him,) might not add somewhat of alacrity to her attentions to his wayward aunt, I will not venture to deny, but she would have done the same if Edward had not been in existence, from the mere effect of her own peace-making spirit, and a generosity of nature which found more pleasure in giving than in possessing. A sweet and happy creature was Cicely; it was difficult even for Mrs. Deborah to resist her gentle voice and artless smiles.

Affairs were in this posture between the belligerents, sometimes war to the knife, sometimes a truce under favour of Cissy's white flag, when one October evening, John Stokes entered the dwelling of his kinswoman to inform her that Edward's apprenticeship had been some time at an end, that he had come of age about a month ago, and that his master, for whom he had continued to work, was so satisfied of his talents, industry, and integrity, that he had offered to take him into partnership for a sum incredibly moderate, considering the advantages which such a connexion would ensure.

"You have more than the money wanted in the Belford Bank, money that ought to have been his," quoth John Stokes, "besides all your property in land and houses and the fund; and if you did advance this sum, which all the world knows is only a small part of what should have belonged to him in right of his father, it would be as safe as if it was in the Bank of England, and the interest paid half-yearly. You ought to give it him out and out; but of course you won't even lend it," pursued this judicious negotiator; "you keep all your money for that precious chap, Mr. 'Dolphus, to make ducks and drakes with after you are dead; a fine jig he'll dance over your grave. You know, I suppose, that we've got the fellow in a cleft stick about that petition the other day? He persuaded old Jacob, who's as deaf as a post, to put his mark to it, and when he was gone, Jacob came to me (I'm the only man in the parish who can make him hear) to ask what it was about. So upon my explaining the matter, Jacob found he had got into the wrong box. But as the chap had taken away his petition, and Jacob could not scratch out his name, what does he do but set his mark to ours o' t'other side; and we've wrote all about it to Sir Robert to explain to the Parliament, lest seeing Jacob's name both ways like, they should think 'twas he, poor fellow, that meant to humbug 'em. A pretty figure Mr. 'Dolphus 'll cut when the story comes to be told in the House of Commons! But that's not the worst. He took the petition to the workhouse, and meeting with little Fan Ropley, who had been taught to write at our charity-school, and is quick at her pen, he makes her sign her name at full length, and then strikes a dot over the *e* to turn it into Francis, and persuade the great folk up at Lunnun, that little Fan's a grown-up man. If that chap won't come some day to be transported for forgery, my name's not John Stokes! Well, dame, will you let Ned have the money? Yes or no?"

That Mrs. Deborah should have suffered the good miller to proceed with his harangue without interruption, can only be accounted for on the score of the loudness of tone on which he piqued himself with so much justice. When she did take up the word, her reply made up in volubility and virulence for any deficiency in sound, concluding by a formal renunciation of her nephew, and a command to his zealous advocate never again to appear within her doors. Upon which, honest John vowed he never would, and departed.

Two or three days after this quarrel, Mr. Adolphus having arrived, as happened not unfrequently, to spend the afternoon at Chalcott, persuaded his hostess to accompany him to see a pond drawn at the Hall, to which, as the daughter of one of Sir Robert's old tenants, she would undoubtedly have the right of *entrée;* and Mrs. Deborah assented to his request, partly because the weather was fine, and the distance short, partly, it may be, from a lurking desire to take her chance as a bystander of a dish of fish; they who need such windfalls least, being commonly those who are most desirous to put themselves in their way.

Mr. Adolphus Lynfield's reasons were obvious enough. Besides the *ennui* of a tête-à-tête, all flattery on one side, and contradiction on the other, he was naturally of the fidgety, restless temperament which hates to be long confined to one place or one occupation, and can never hear of a gathering of people, whatever might be the occasion, without longing to find himself amongst them.

Moreover, he had, or professed to have, a passion for field sports of every description; and having that very season contrived, with his usual curious infelicity, to get into as many scrapes in shooting as shall last most sportsmen their whole lives—having shot a spaniel instead of a hare, a keeper instead of a partridge, and his own foot instead of a pheasant, and finally, having been taken up for a poacher, although wholly innocent of the death of any bird that ever wore feathers,—after all these woeful experiences, (to say nothing of mischances in angling which might put to shame those of our friend Mr. Thompson,) he found himself particularly well disposed to a diversion which appeared to combine in most choice union the appearance of sporting, which he considered essential to his reputation, with a most happy exemption from the usual sporting requisites, exertion or skill. All that he would have to do would be to look on and talk,—to throw out a hint here and a suggestion there, and find fault with every thing and everybody, like a man who understood what was going forward.

The weather was most propitious; a bright breezy sunny October day, with light snowy clouds, chased by a keen crisp wind across the deep blue heavens,—and the beautiful park, the turf of an emerald green, contrasting with the brown fern and tawny woods, rivalling in richness and brightness the vivid hues of the autumnal sky. Nothing could exceed the gorgeous tinting of the magnificent trees, which, whether in detached clumps or forest-like masses, formed the pride and glory of the place. The oak still retaining its dark and heavy verdure; the elm letting fall a shower of yellow leaves, that tinged the ground beneath; the deep orange of the horse-chestnut, the beech varying from ruddy gold to greenish brown; and above all, the shining green of the holly, and the rich purplish red of the old thorns, those hoary thorns, the growth of centuries, gave to this old English gentleman's seat much of the variety and beauty of the American backwoods. The house, a stately ancient mansion, from the porch of which you might expect to see Sir Roger de Coverley issue, stood half-way up a gentle hill, finely backed by woods of great extent; and the pond, which was the object of the visit, was within sight of the windows, but so skilfully veiled by trees, as to appear of much greater extent than it really was.

The master and mistress of the Hall, with their pretty daughters, were absent on a tour:—Is any English country family ever at home in the month of October, in these days of fashionable enterprise? They were gone to visit the temples of Thebes or the ruins of Carthage, the Fountains of the Nile or the Falls of Niagara, St. Sophia or the Kremlin, or some such pretty little excursion, which ladies and gentlemen now talk of as familiarly "as maids of puppy dogs." They were away. But enough of the household remained at Chalcott, to compose, with a few visiters, a sufficiently numerous and animated group.

The first person whom Mrs. Deborah espied, (and it is remarkable that we always see first those whom we had rather not see at all,) was her old enemy the miller,—a fisherman of so much experience and celebrity, that his presence might have been reckoned upon as certain—busily engaged, together with some half-dozen stout and active coadjutors, in dragging the net ashore, amidst a chorus of exclamations and cautions from the various assistants, and the breathless expectation of the spectators on the bank, amongst whom were Mrs. Thornby and Cicely, accompanied by a tall, athletic young man of dark complexion, with peculiarly bright eyes and curling hair, whom his aunt immediately recognised as Edward.

"How improved he is!" was the thought that flashed across her mind, as with an air of respectful alacrity he stepped forward to meet her; but the miller, in tugging at his nets, happened to look towards them, and ashamed that he of all men should see her change of feeling, she turned away abruptly, without acknowledging his salutation, and walked off to the other side with her attendant, Mr. Adolphus.

"Drat the perverse old jade!" exclaimed John Stokes, involuntarily, as he gave a mighty tug, which brought half the net ashore.

"She 's heavy, my good sir!" observed the pompous butler, conceiving that the honest miller's exclamation had reference to the sport; "only see how full she is! We shall have a magnificent haul!"

And the spectators, male and female, crowded round, and the fishermen exerted themselves so efficiently, that in two minutes the net was on dry land.

"Nothing but weeds and rubbish!" ejaculated the disappointed butler, a peculiarly blank look taking the place of his usual self-importance. "What can have become of the fish?"

"The net has been improperly drawn," observed Mr. Adolphus; "I myself saw four or five large carp just before it was dragged ashore!"

"Better fling you in, master 'Dolphus, by way of bait!" ejaculated our friend the miller; "I've seen jacks in this pond that would make no more bones of swallowing a leg or an arm of such an atomy as you, if they did not have a try at the whole body, than a shark would of bolting down Punch in the show. As to carp, everybody that ever fished a pond knows their tricks. Catch them in a net if you can. They swim round and round, just to let you look at 'em, and then they drop plump into the mud, and lie as still and as

close as so many stones. But come, Mr. Tomkins," continued honest John, addressing the butler, "we 'll try again. I'm minded that we shall have better luck this time. Here are some brave large tench, which never move till the water is disturbed; we shall have a good chance for them as well as for the jacks. Now, steady there, you in the boat. Throw her in, boys, and mind you don't draw too fast!" So to work they all went again.

All was proceeding prosperously, and the net, evidently well filled with fish, was dragging slowly to land, when John Stokes shouted suddenly from the other side of the pond—"Dang it, if that unlucky chap, master 'Dolphus there, has not got hold of the top of the net! He 'll pull it over. See, that great jack has got out already. Take the net from him, Tom! He 'll let all the fish loose, and tumble in himself, and the water at that part is deep enough to drown twenty such manikins. Not that I think drowning likely to be his fate,—witness that petition business," muttered John to himself in a sort of parenthesis. "Let go, I say, or you will be in. Let go, can't ye?" added he, in his loudest tone.

And with the word, Mr. Adolphus, still struggling to retain his hold of the net, lost his balance and fell in, and catching at the person next him, who happened to be Mrs. Deborah, with the hope of saving himself, dragged her in after him.

Both sank, and amidst the confusion that ensued, the shrieks and sobs of the women, the oaths and exclamations of the men, the danger was so imminent that both might have been drowned, had not Edward Thornby, hastily flinging off his coat and hat, plunged in and rescued Mrs. Deborah, whilst good John Stokes, running round the head of the pond as nimbly as a boy, did the same kind office for his prime aversion, the attorney's clerk. What a sound kernel is sometimes hidden under a rough and rugged rind!

Mr. Adolphus, more frightened than hurt, and with so much of the conceit washed out of him by his involuntary cold bath, that it might be accounted one of the most fortunate accidents in his life, was conveyed to the hall; but her own house being almost equally near, Mrs. Deborah was at once taken home, and put comfortably to bed in her own chamber.

About two hours afterwards, the whole of the miller's family, Mrs. Thornby still pallid and trembling, Cicely smiling through her tears, and her father as blunt and free-spoken as ever, were assembled round the homely couch of their maiden cousin.

"I tell you I must have the lawyer fetched directly. I can't sleep till I have made my will;" said Mrs. Deborah.

"Better not," responded John Stokes; "you'll want it altered to-morrow."

"What's that you say, cousin John?" inquired the spinster.

"That if you make your will to night, you'll change your mind to-morrow," reiterated John Stokes. "Ned's going to be married to my Cicely," added he, "and that you mayn't like, or if you did like it this week, you might not like it next. So you'd better let matters rest as they are."

"You're a provoking man, John Stokes," said his cousin—"a very provoking obstinate man. But I'll convince you for once. Take that key, Mrs. Thornby," quoth she, raising herself in bed, and fumbling in an immense pair of pockets for a small old-fashioned key, "and open the 'scrutoire, and give me the pen and ink, and the old narrow brown book, that you'll find at the top. Not like his marrying Cicely! Why I always have loved that child—don't cry, Cissy!—and have always had cause, for she has been a kind little creature to me. Those dahlias came from her, and the sweet posy," pursued Mrs. Deborah, pointing to a nosegay of autumn flowers, the old fragrant monthly rose, mignonette, heliotrope, cloves, and jessamine, which stood by the bedside. "Ay, that's the book, Mrs. Thornby; and there, Cissy," continued Aunt Deborah, filling up the check, with a sum far larger than that required for the partnership—"there, Cissy, is your marriage portion. Don't cry so, child!" said she, as the affectionate girl hung round her neck in a passion of grateful tears—"don't cry, but find out Edward, and send for the lawyer, for I'm determined to settle my affairs to-night. And now, John Stokes, I know I've been a cross old woman, but....."

"Cousin Deborah," interrupted John, seizing her withered hand with a grip like a smith's vice,—"Cousin Deborah, thou hast acted nobly, and I beg thy pardon once for all. God bless thee!—Dang it," added the honest miller to himself, "I do verily believe that this squabbling has been mainly my fault, and that if I had not been so provoking she would not have been so contrary. Well, she has made us all happy, and we must try to make her happy, in return. If we did not, we should deserve to be soused in the fish-pond along with that unhappy chap, Master 'Dolphus. For my part," continued the good yeoman, forming with great earnestness a solemn resolution—"for my part, I've fully made up my mind never to contradict her again, say what she will. No, not if she says black's white! It's contradiction that makes women contrary; it sets their backs up, like. I'll never contradict her again, so long as my name's John Stokes."

EXTRACTS FROM FINDEN'S TABLEAUX.

[*The following pieces are contributions of Miss Mitford to* "FINDEN'S TABLEAUX," *of which Annual she was the editor.*]

PREFACE.

IN commending this volume to the public, the editor has little to say, beyond the pleasant duty of thanking her accomplished coadjutors for such poetry, and, in one instance, such prose, as may render her pages no unfit companion to the beautiful engravings which they are intended to illustrate.

For her own poor part, she has only to solicit for stories necessarily brief, and written, from circumstances over which she had no control, in more than usual haste, the same indulgence which has been extended to the productions, —over-numerous, perhaps,—which she has sent forth during the last fifteen years. It is right to mention, that the two songs in one of her little tales, have been stolen from herself; being verses that she did not quite wish to die; and which had appeared in two works out of print, and, to all intents and purposes, as good or as bad as manuscript.

Three Mile Cross, September 19th, 1837.

ENGLAND.

THE KING'S WARD.

"I have no joy of this contract to-night."

SHAKSPEARE.

"WHAT! not a word to thy poor old nurse, or thy faithful bower-women? Not a nod, or a smile, or a kindly look, to show that thou heedest us? Thou that wast wont to be the merriest and kindliest damsel in merry Cumberland, the fair and the noble Edith Clifford, the wealthiest maiden north of Trent, about to be wedded, too, to the young Philip Howard, the goodliest and the bravest knight of King Henry's court, for whose favour the gay dames of the south have been trying and vying at pageant, at joust, and at tournament, ever since his return from the wars! Men say that, for all that he hath fought against the Soldan, and carried the "blanche-lion," the old banner of his house, foremost among the proud chivalry of France and Italy, he hath rather the mien of a young page than of a stalwart warrior, so smooth and fair is his brow, so graceful his form, so gentle and courteous his bearing. Still amort, Sweeting! mute as a marble image on thy very bridal eve!" And the good old Margaret, seeing her lady still unmoved, paused for very vexation.

"So generous a wooer too!" exclaimed one of the attendant maidens, glancing at the profusion of rich gifts with which a heavy wain had been laden, and which had arrived that very day at the castle, under convoy of the good knight's squire, and a score or two of pages and men-at-arms, and which now lay in magnificent profusion about the tapestried chamber, scattered amidst the quaint antique furniture, high-backed ebony chairs, oaken screens, cut into mimic lace-work; marble slabs, resting on gilded griffins, or some such picturesque monsters of heraldry; and huge cabinets, composed of the rarest woods, an entire history, profane or sacred, carved upon the doors, and surmounted with spires and pinnacles, like the decorated shrine of a Gothic cathedral; the whole scene, lighted up by the bright beams of the evening sun, coloured into a thousand vivid hues, as they glanced through the storied panes of the oriel window. A scene more bright, or more gorgeous, than that stately lady's bower, tenanted, as it was, by woman in her fairest forms, by venerable age and blooming youth, could hardly be found in merry England. Yet there sat the youthful lady of the castle, in the midst of all this costly beauty, languid and listless, pale and motionless as a statue.

"So generous a wooer, too!" exclaimed Mistress Mabel, the pretty bright-eyed brunette, the Lady Edith's principal bower-woman, who being reckoned the best adjuster of a head-tire, and the most skilful professor of

all arts of the loom and the needle, whether in white-seam, cut work, tapestry, or broidery, of any maiden in the north country, was more especially alive to the rarity and richness of Sir Philip's gifts.

"So generous a wooer, too! only look at these carpets from Persia! 'Tis a marvel how folk can have the heart to put foot on such bright flowers; they seem as if they were growing! And these velvets from Genoa; were ever such colours seen? And the silken stuffs from Padua, that stand on end with their own richness; what kirtles and mantles they will make! and the gloves of Cales, that cause the chamber to smell like a garden full of spice, cloves, and jessamine! And these veils from the Low Countries, as fine as a spider's web! And the cloth of gold, and the cloth of silver, —where did Master Eustace say they came from, Dame Margaret? And this golden vessel for perfumes, which looks like a basket all over-run with grapes and ivy?"

"That was wrought by a cunning goldsmith of Florence," responded old Margaret, "whose skill is so surpassing, that, albeit he employs chiefly the precious metals, the workmanship is of more value than the materials. This silver tray, with the delicate trellis-work, wreathed with lilies and roses round the edge, and the story of Diana and Ac—Ac—fie on my old brains! I shall forget my own name soon!—Diana and—he that was turned into a stag—"

"Actæon!" whispered Alice, the fairest and most youthful of the Lady Edith's attendants, gently and unostentatiously supplying the good dame's failure of memory, without looking up from her work.

"Ay, Actæon! I thank thee, Alice. Thy wits are younger than mine by fifty good years, or more. This silver salver, with the light delicate edge, that seems like the work of the fairies, and the story of Diana and Actæon inside, is by the same hand."

"And then the caskets of precious stones!" pursued the enthusiastic waiting damsel, warming at the contemplation of the finery. "The brooches and bracelets! The coronets and the carkanets! why, yonder wreath of emeralds and amethysts, which lies on the table underneath the great Venetian glass—to think of my lady never having had the curiosity to look into *that!*" (and Mistress Mabel took a self-satisfied peep at her own pretty figure, as it was reflected on the broad clear surface of the rare and costly mirror,) "that single wreath, which she hath never vouchsafed to glance upon: and the ropes of pearl which I laid upon her lap, and which she hath let drop upon the floor;—do pick them up, Alice! —I verily believe the foolish wench careth as little for these precious adornments as the Lady Edith herself! That one wreath, and those strings of pearl, be worth an earl's ransom."

At this moment the sound of a harp was heard, and the voice of the minstrel arose from beneath the casement:—

"Waken to pleasure,
Lady sweet!
Lo! an empire's treasure
Is spread at thy feet:
Here be shawls of Cashmere fine;
Rubies from Bucharia's mine;
The pear-shaped pearls of Ormuz' bay;
And gold, 'mid Yemen's sands that lay.
Waken to pleasure,
Lady sweet!
Love, and love's treasure,
Be spread at thy feet."

The air was smooth and flowing, and the voice of Robert Fitz-Stephen, one of the most approved of the courtly minstrels: but still the Lady Edith sat pale and motionless, as though the tide of melody had glided unfelt over her senses, producing no more impression than the waters of the lake upon the plumage of the cygnet.

Dame Margaret sighed deeply; and Mabel, giving her head a provoked impatient jerk, resumed her embroidery with such furious rapidity, that she broke her silk half-a-dozen times in the course of a minute, and well-nigh spoiled the carnation upon which she was engaged, and which she had intended to outvie the natural blossom in Father Francis's flower-border. Young Alice, drawing her tapestry-frame nearer to them, and further from the Lady Edith, and speaking in a low tone, even lower than her own soft and gentle natural voice, resumed the conversation.

"For my poor part, good Mabel (call me foolish an' thou wilt), I do *not* wonder at our sweet lady's sadness. Think what a piteous thing it is to be an orphan; think but of that great grief! And then to be a great heir to boot, left in the king's ward, and dragged from her old dear home in her old dear north countrie, to this fine grand castle (which, albeit her own also in right of her lady mother, seems too strange and too grand for happiness,) and all for the purpose of being wedded to this young lord, with his costly glittering gifts, who hath never vouchsafed to come near her until now, on the very eve of the bridal, when it hath pleased him to give notice of his approach. Holy St. Agatha defend me from such a wooer! A wooer, whose actions show, as plainly as words could tell, that he seeketh the Lady Edith's broad lands, and careth as little for the Lady Edith's warm heart, as I do for a withered rose-leaf. I'll tell thee what, Mabel, I never look to see such happy days again, as when we dwelt in our old dear home, amongst the pleasant vales and breezy mountains of Cumberland. There was health and freedom in the very air. Dost thou not remember the day when old Geoffrey the falconer had lamed himself among the rocks, and the youth Albert, the travelling minstrel, took charge of the hawks, and waited on my lady, as if he had been trained to the sport all his

life long! Hast thou forgot how she stood by the lake, with her favourite merlin on her wrist, and her white greyhound Lily-bell at her side, looking like the very goddess of the chase, so full of life and spirit, and cheeriness? And that bright evening when she led the dance round the May-pole? Well-a-day, poor lady! 'tis a woful change!"

It was remarkable that the Lady Edith's attention, which neither the louder speech of her elder attendants, nor the ringing tones of the harper, had been able to command, was arrested at once by the soft low voice of Alice. The womanly sympathy sank soothingly into the woman's heart, just as the gentle rain from heaven penetrates the parched hill-side, from whose arid surface the sharp and arrowy hail rebounds without impression. The drooping mistress listened in mournful silence, whilst her faithful maiden, unconscious that she had attracted her notice, pursued, in still lower accents, the train of thought which her own fond recollections of the freedom and happiness which they had tasted among their native mountains had awakened in her mind.

"Poor Albert, too! the wandering minstrel, who came to the castle gate to crave lodging for one night, and sojourned with us for three long months; and then, when he had wrought himself up to go,—and, verily, it was a parting like that of the spirit and the flesh, when he left our old walls,—returned again and again, and finally fixed himself in the fisherman's cottage, where the mountain streamlet, after meandering along the meadow, falls into the lake. Poor Albert! I warrant me he taketh good care of Lily-bell and my lady's merlin, whereof he craved the charge from old Geoffrey. I marvel whether my lady knoweth that her pretty Lily-bell and her favourite falcon be in hands that will tend them so faithfully, for her dear sake! To my fancy, Mabel, that poor youth, albeit so fearful and so ashamed in her presence, worshipped the very ground that she trod upon. I have seen him kiss Lily-bell's glossy head, after her hand had patted it, reverently and devoutly, as though it had been a holy relic in the great minster at Durham."

Again the full and ringing chords of the harp—but, this time, to an old border air, well known to the northern maids—arose from beneath the casement. The voice, too, was different from that of the courtly minstrel—deeper, manlier, pouring forth the spirit of the words, as they gushed spontaneously, as it seemed, from his lips, as though, in his case, song were but the medium of feeling, and the poet's fancy and the musician's skill buried in the impassioned grief of the despairing lover. So the strain rang:—

"High o'er the baron's castle tall,
Rich banners float with heavy fall;
And light and song, in mingling tide,
Pour forth, to hail the lovely bride.
Yet, lady, still the birchen tree
Waves o'er the cottage on the lea;
The babbling stream runs bright and fair,—
The love-star of the west shines there."

"Ha!" exclaimed old Margaret; "that ditty hath aroused my lady. See how she listens."

"'Tis the roundelay which she herself was wont to sing," observed Mabel; "but the words are different."

"Peace! peace!" cried the lady Edith, checking, with some impatience the prattle of her attendants, and leaning against the casement which she flung open, as the deep and earnest voice of the minstrel again resounded through the apartment. "Be silent, I pray ye!"

"Mailed warders pace o'er keep and tower;
Gay maidens deck the lady's bower;
Page, squire, and knight, a princely train,
Wait duteous at her bridle rein.
Yet in that cot the milk-white hound,
The favourite falcon, still are found;
And one more fond, more true than they,
Born to adore and to obey."

"Alack! alack!" sighed the tender-hearted Alice. "Well-a-day, poor youth! I ever deemed that his strange fondness for Lily-bell —albeit as pretty and playful a creature as ever gambolled on the green-sward, and as swift of foot as ever followed hare over the mountains—had a deeper source than love of the good hound. Well-a-day, poor Albert! He was a goodly youth!"

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed the Lady Edith, as the symphony finished, and the voice again mingled with the chords of the harp, struck falteringly and unsteadily now, as though the hand trembled and the heart waxed faint.

"The coronet of jewels rare
Shines proudly o'er her face so fair;
And titles high and higher name
Lord Howard's lovely bride may claim.
And yet, the wreath of hawthorn bough
Once lightlier pressed that snowy brow;
And hearts that wither now were gay,
When she was but the queen of May."

"Alas! alas! my lady, my dear sweet lady!" murmured Alice to herself, as poor Edith, after lingering at the window long enough to ascertain that the harp was silent, and the harper gone, sank into a seat with a sigh and a look of desolation, that proved, more plainly than words, the truth of the last lines of the minstrel's lay.

"Alas! alas! dear lady!" exclaimed she, in a louder tone, as the sudden burst of startling noises, the warlike blasts of trump and cornet, the jarring dissonant sound caused by raising the heavy portcullis, and lowering the massive drawbridge, and the echoing tramp of barbed steeds and mailed horsemen in the courts of the castle, showed that the expected bridegroom had at length arrived.

Edith wrung her hands in desperation.

"This knight I cannot, and I will not see. Go to him, Margaret; say that I am sick—that I am dying. The blessed saints can bear witness that thou wilt say but the truth in so telling him. Sick at heart am I, sick to the death! Oh that I had died before this wretched hour!" And poor Edith burst into an agony of tears, that shook her very frame.

"Why goest thou not, Margaret?" inquired she, a few moments after, when, exhausted by its own violence, her grief had become more tranquil. "Why dost thou not carry my message to the Lord Howard? Why dally thus, old dame? Mabel, go thou! They stand about me as though I were an ignorant child, that knew not what she said! Do my bidding on the instant, Mabel: thou wert best!"

"Nay, good my lady, but our gracious lord the king—"

"Tell me not of kings, maiden! I'll to sanctuary. I'll fly this very night to my aunt, the prioress of St. Mary's. The church knoweth well how to protect her votaries. Woe is me! that, for being born a rich heir, I must be shut from the free breath of heaven, the living waters, and the flowery vales, in the dark and gloomy cloister! To change the locks that float upon the breeze for the dismal veil! To waste my youth in the cold and narrow convent cell—a living tomb! Oh! it is a sad and a weary lot. But better so, than to plight my troth to one whom I have never seen, and can never love! to give my hand to one man, whilst my heart abideth with another."

"Lady!" cried Margaret; "do my senses play me false! Or is it Edith Clifford that speaketh thus of a low-born churl?"

"A low-born churl!" responded Edith.—"There is a regality of mind and of spirit about that youth, which needeth neither wealth nor lineage to even him with the greatest—the inborn nobility of virtue and of genius! Never till now knew I that he loved me; and now—Hasten to this lord, Alice; and see that he cometh not hither. Wherefore lingerest thou, maiden?" inquired Edith, of the pitying damsel, who staid her steps with an exclamation of surprise, as the door of the chamber was gently opened. "Tell the Lord Howard the very truth; men say that he is good and wise—too wise, too good, to seek his own happiness at the expense of a poor maiden's misery. Tell him the whole truth, Alice. Spare thy mistress that shame. Say that I love him not—say that I love—"

"Nay, sweetest lady, from thine own dear lips must come that sweet confession," said a voice at her side, and, turning to the well-known acents, Edith saw, at her feet, him who, having won her heart as the wandering minstrel, the humble falconer, claimed her hand as the rich and high-born Philip Howard, the favourite of the king.

A cry of joy burst from the astonished waiting-women, and was echoed by the pretty greyhound, Lily-bell, who had followed the Lord Howard into the room, and now stood trembling with ecstasy before her fair mistress, resting her head in her lap, and looking up into her face with eyes beaming with affectionate gladness—eyes that literally glowed with delight.

Never was happiness more perfect than that of the betrothed maiden, on this so dreaded bridal eve. And heartily did her faithful attendants sympathise in her happiness; only Mabel found it impossible to comprehend why, in the hour of hope and joy, as in that of fear and sorrow, her dearly beloved finery should be neglected.

"To think," quoth the provoked bower-woman, "that now that all these marvels have come about, and that the Lord Howard turns out to be none other than the youth Albert, my lady will not vouchsafe to tell me whether her kirtle shall be of cloth of gold or cloth of silver; or whether she will don the coronet of rubies or the emerald wreath! Well-a-day!" quoth Mabel, "this love! this love!"

FLORENCE.

THE WAGER.

"Gone to be married! Gone to swear a peace!"
Shakspeare.

"Lily on liquid roses floating!
So floats yon foam o'er pink champagne.
Fain would I join such pleasant boating,
And prove that ruby main,
And float away on wine!

"Those seas are dangerous (greybeards swear)
Whose sea-beach is the goblet's brim;
And true it is they drown all Care—
But what care we for him,
So we but float on wine!

"And true it is they cross in pain,
Who sober cross the Stygian ferry;
But only make our Styx—Champagne,
And we shall cross right merry,
Floating away on wine.

"Old Charon's self shall make him mellow,
Then gaily row his boat from shore;
While we, and every jovial fellow,
Hear unconcern'd the oar
That dips itself in wine!"*

"So you really wrote this, Giovanni?" said the young and pretty Beatrice Alberti, as she sat upon a terrace of her brother's villa, overlooking the Val d'Arno. "Sing it to me. I want to hear it in your own voice. Can Antonio play the air?"

And the little page ran rapidly over the notes, and then accompanied the conte's rich,

* The editor is indebted for this Anacreontic—almost an impromptu—to the kind friend, Mr. Kenyon, (she is proud to name him,) to whom she also owes the stanzas entitled "Shrine of the Virgin."

mellow, baritone voice, in a melody as rich and flowing as the verses. Both the singing and the playing were full of right Italian taste; and the fair Florentine, charmed with both the words and the air, was evidently not a little proud of her gay and gallant brother, whose talent as a poet she had never even suspected.

"Well," said Giovanni, when he had concluded, "will this do, Beatrice? Will that Anacreontic win me the laurel wreath to-night at the Palazzo Riccardi, think you?"

Beatrice started from her seat in astonishment.

"You go to the Palazzo Riccardi! You contend for the laurel crown! You, Giovanni Alberti, who, since you were the height of Antonio there, have done nothing but laugh at the old *précieuse*, the marchesa, with her pedants and her poets, and all the trumpery of all the Della Cruscans transported into a lady's saloon! You are making a fool of me, brother! You never can mean it!"

"I am perfectly in earnest, I assure you," replied the conti, looking, or rather trying to look, as grave as an habitually joyous and hilarious temperament would permit. "I have repented of my sins of scoffing and mockery, and mean to make that venerable priestess of the muses all possible amends by enacting the part of her Monsieur Trissotin, her *homme d'esprit*."

"With this great lawsuit pending, too! A suit which, if you gain it, will leave that sweet-looking creature, her daughter (every one speaks so well of that pretty, gentle Bianci), little better than a beggar! Why, it would be like the story of one of the Montechi, in the house of the Capuletti, in times of old. Think of that dismal tragedy! And, then, our uncle, the cardinal, what would he say? Think of him."

"There are no tragedies now-a-days, Beatrice — at least none of the Romeo and Giulietta description; they have left off happening: and as to our dearly beloved uncle, he is a man of peace, and also — with reverence be it spoken—a man of contrivance. Leave his eminence to me. Go I shall; and I'll wager the antique gem that you were wishing for the other day, do you remember?—the Psyche—against your doves, that I bring home the prize. I see," continued he gaily, "that you think my verses too good to please that fantastical assembly; and, perhaps, you are right. But good or bad, they will answer my purpose; and you shall confess yourself that my wager is won." So saying, the light-hearted cavalier nodded to his sister, and departed, carolling as he went, the refrain of his own song, "Floating away on wine."

Five minutes saw him prancing on his mettled barb, a fiery roan, whose gay curvets and sudden bounds showed to great advantage his noble owner's horsemanship; for the young Conte Alberti was, by common reputation, as well as in the estimate of his fond sister, reckoned amongst the most accomplished cavaliers of Florence; and a very short space of time found him passing through the Lung 'Arno, on his way to his splendid home in the Piazza del Granduca, regarding with the indifference of an accustomed eye and a pre-occupied mind, the spacious, yet tranquil town, whose size, compared with its population, and whose fortified palaces are so striking to strangers; as well as the magnificent groups in bronze and marble, mere copies of which enrich the museums of other nations, whilst the originals are the familiar and out-door treasures of the city of the Medici.

Little thought our friend Giovanni, passing them at full speed on his full-blooded barb, of palace or of statue; and as little, some few hours after, when pacing in the twilight the church of Santa Croce, did he heed, even while looking them in the face, the monuments of Galileo, of Machiavelli, or of him who wore so nobly the triple crown of Art — the sculptor, painter, architect, Michael Angelo Buonarotti. His thoughts were on other matters.

"Ay, there is the good father safe enough until he be wanted, I warrant him," cried he, gazing complacently upon a round, rosy, good-humoured brother of the order of St. Francis, drowsily ensconced beside a dimly-lighted shrine. "Per Bacco! the Monte Pulciano hath done its good office. Look, if he have not fallen asleep over his beads! And a comfortable nap to thee, Father Paolo! Stay there till I come to rouse thee!" And off danced the mercurial conte, murmuring his old burden, "Floating away, floating away, floating away on wine!"

A blue-stocking party loses none of its proverbial dulness in the marble halls of Italy; and the assembly gathered together in the marchesa's magnificent saloon—that is to say, that very important part of such an assembly, the listeners, were roused from a state of drowsihood, scarcely inferior to that of Father Paolo, by the unexpected entrance of the young heir of the Alberti in the palace of the Riccardi.

It was a most animating sensation. The appearance of a Montagu amongst the festivities of the Capulets, was nothing to it. The commerce of flattery (for the important business of the evening had not yet begun) suddenly ceased; and the foundress of these classical amusements, a *fade* and faded lady, emulous of her of the golden violet, who sat on a fauteuil, slightly elevated, with the laurel-wreath on its crimson velvet cushion, laid upon a small table of rich mosaic, before her, and two starched and withered dames of the noble houses of Mozzi and Gerini at her side, stopped short in the midst of a compliment, with which, as in duty bound, she was repaying the adulation of one of the competitors

for the prize, and started between horror and astonishment, as if she had been confronted by an apparition.

Our modern Romeo, however, was not a man to be dumfounded by the amazement of a great lady, or awe-stricken by her displeasure. He advanced with a mixture of gaiety and gallantry, an assured yet winning grace, which, for the moment, at least, the stately marchesa found irresistible, and professing himself an humble aspirant at the court of the Muses, come to do homage to their fair representative, took his station at the back of her chair, and listened with smiling attention to the competitors for the wreath.

It was, perhaps, the very worst period of Italian literature; before Alfieri had come in his might to renew the old strength and power of the sweetest of modern languages; and when the versifiers of the day, "the word-catchers, who *lived* on syllables," confined themselves to mere verbal quiddities, and the most feeble and trivial imitations of the worst parts — the only parts that such mimics can hope to catch—of the great poets of a preceding age.

Signor Ricci, a lean, yellow, shrivelled anatomy, began the recitations with squeaking forth a canzone to Angiolina, all bristling with *concetti*, after the manner, as he was pleased to say, of Petrarch; and was followed by a wild, sallow, pseudo-enthusiast, who declaimed, with astounding vociferation and gesticulation, an unfinished and seemingly interminable dream, in the involved and difficult triple rhyme which, beauty and sublimity apart, was, in the matter of obscurity, pretty truly what it professed to be — a fragment in imitation of Dante.

> For "flickering lights, to no one focus brought,
> And mirage mists still baffled thirsty thought,
> And night-mare phantasies from drowsy grot,
> And far similitudes that liken not."
> *Rhymed Plea for Tolerance.*

Signor Puzzi beat Signor Ricci all to nothing. And accordingly he gratified to the highest point the bad taste of this coterie of Italian *précieuses;* and in the midst of tapping of fans and murmurs of admiration of this grand effort of their chosen bard, the Monsieur Trissotin of Florence, our friend Giovanni gently stole off to a quiet corner near the door, where sat a very sweet-looking little maiden, whose black eyes sparkled with innocent pleasure, and whose rosy lips curled into irrepressible smiles at his approach. She made room for him beside her, with a natural symplicity and artlessness that formed a strange contrast with the affectation and *minauderie* of the rest of the assembly.

"So you are a poet, Conte Alberti?" said she, in a low voice.

"To be sure I am," replied he gaily; "any thing that will bring me to you."

"Really a poet?" asked the lady.

"Why, that is putting my modesty to a very severe test," said the gentleman. "Really a poet! Who may dare answer that question in the affirmative? Judge for yourself. Come out into the porch, and Antonio shall bring his guitar, and I'll sing the words to his accompaniment. You have heard such a serenade before. Don't you remember our old signal?

'The moon is abroad in her glory to-night,
Mid the deep blue sky and the cloudlets white;
Gaily her beams pierce the vine's trellised shade;
Softly they sleep on the long colonnade;
Calm her path in the heavens, though the bright orb below
Still trembles and heaves to the dark river's flow.

All lovely things are around us to-night;
The rose with her perfume, the moon with her light;'

and so forth. This song is worth a thousand of that. To be sure," added he, laughing, "that is not saying much for it. But these stanzas are really good. Only come and hear."

"You 'll win the prize, then?"

"I have laid a wager with Beatrice that I carry the prize home to her, in spite of them all; and it will be your fault if I lose it. Only come out into the porch; I can't sing here. Besides, I have something important to say to you. I want you to help me to get rid of our weary lawsuit. Would you not like to put an end to this unnatural strife, and live with Beatrice as a sister and friend?"

"Ay, from the bottom of my heart, would I, Conte Alberti!" said Bianca, clasping her hands fervently. "From the very bottom of my heart! And with you, too," she added, with great simplicity.

"Come with me now, then, and I will show you how it may be managed. I beseech you, come."

"Oh, Giovanni, I cannot; I must not! We shall be missed. See, Signor Puzzi has finished, and they are going to call for your poem."

"Heaven forefend!" cried Giovanni. "No! the danger's past. Young Caroli is going to declaim a drama *à l'improvvista*. What subject do they give him? The Judgment of Solomon, by Jove! The Judgment of Solomon!!! Now, will he turn the marchesa into the Queen of Sheba, and go flattering on for two good hours, at the very least. They are safe enough now. Come, fairest Bianca! — Dearest Bianca, come!"

"Well, Beatrice," said Giovanni, as he led his pretty wife to his delighted sister, "is not my wager fairly won? The cardinal suggested this catastrophe to our story; not indeed the means, — per Bacco! they would never have entered his eminence's brains; but he said, a year or two ago—that is to say, he intimated—that if the heir male on one side married the heiress on the other, he, the aforesaid

heir male, would have nobody to go to law with but himself. I had not then seen my little Bianca, and, therefore, I turned a deaf ear to his hints. But after I had seen her, Fede di Dio! if it had been necessary, to gain admittance, that I should have constructed as vile a canzone as Signor Ricci,—and have dreamed as detestable a dream as Signor Puzzi,—and dramatised the Judgment of Solomon into the bargain, I 'd have done it. We have sent a dutiful billet to the marchesa, and I have no doubt but, for joy at getting rid of the lawsuit, and out of compliment to my poetical genius, she will behave like a reasonable woman—the more especially as what is done cannot be undone, and all the anger in the world will not mend it. So now, my fairest Beatrice, you have nothing to do but to set her the good example of bearing misfortune with philosophy, and pay me my wager. The doves! Signora, the doves!"

CEYLON.

THE LOST PEARL.

"The gorgeous East, with richest hand,
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold."
MILTON.

It was somewhere in the last quarter of the last century, that Charles Pemberton, the younger son of an ancient but impoverished family, having committed the old-fashioned folly of marrying a young lady, for no better qualifications than beauty, sense, and goodness, without regard to those worldly considerations which modern prudence deems indispensable, esteemed himself most fortunate to inherit, through the bequest of a distant relative, a small estate in the Island of Ceylon; and to obtain a commission in a Dutch regiment serving in that colony, in which, in the course of fourteen or fifteen years, he attained the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

Living chiefly upon his own property, about a mile from the beautiful village of Negumbo, amongst some of the finest scenery of Ceylon (which the inhabitants imagine to have been the abode of our first parents, the paradise of the old world); enjoying an elegant competence, and all sufficient to each other, Colonel and Mrs. Pemberton would have considered themselves blessed beyond the ordinary lot of humanity, in spite of their banishment from the country they loved so dearly, and the society they were so well calculated to adorn, but for the great evil of eastern climates, the successive deaths of several promising children. Five fine boys and girls had they followed to the grave; and the only one who now remained to them was their little son, William, a child remarkable for his affectionate temper, his intelligence, and his beauty; upon whom both parents doted, more particularly, perhaps, his mother, whose own health had been considerably injured by the repeated trials which her maternal feelings had undergone.

No tutor had been provided for Willy, whom they intended hereafter to send to England for education. Meanwhile his father taught him, when at home in the intervals of duty, whilst Mrs. Pemberton supplied his place in his absence; but the active, lively boy was much about in the cinnamon plantations (just then beginning to be cultivated by the few British residents on the islands,) which were superintended by a Cinglese, called Vinna, a man of remarkable quickness and much apparent fidelity; whilst on longer excursions, he was put in charge of a superior domestic servant, a Malay of the name of Gatura, who, by his pliancy of manner, and powers of amusement, had greatly ingratiated himself with his young master.

So implicit was the colonel's confidence in these dependants, especially in Vinna — for there was an occasional expression in the dark eye of the Malay, which recalled to recollection the vindictiveness of his race;—but such was his reliance upon Vinna's integrity and care, that it came upon him like no common shock, to find, having contracted for the sale of some essential oil of cinnamon (extracted from such fragments as happen to be broken off in packing up the bales), and having seen it actually measured and ready for delivery, that half-a-dozen bottles of this valuable oil, which sometimes sells as high as ten pounds British, a pint, were missing; and that, upon subjecting all concerned to an examination, two of the very peculiar bottles, in which the oil had been contained, were found in a corner of Vinna's hut, behind the earthen vessels used for cooking rice; whilst another was hidden between the brass basin and the pestle and mortar, where the spices are pounded, upon the bench which surrounded the apartment, and formed, with the articles which we have enumerated, nearly the whole of its simple furniture. The bottles were not merely distinguishable by their fabric and shape; but the strong aroma of the precious commodity, and even a few drops left in the bottom, proved that they had been secretly and hastily emptied of their contents; and that Vinna, the trusted superintendent of this valuable manufactory, was himself the thief.

After one simple but earnest denial of the charge—a denial to which his master made no other reply than pointing to the concealed bottles—the delinquent attempted no further defence, but resigned himself tranquilly to whatever punishment the laws might decree. That extremity was, however, averted by the intercession of Willy, whose urgent entreaty for

pardon for his friend was so far complied with, that Colonel Pemberton contented himself with dismissing the favoured servant, who had set so flagrant an example of dishonesty to the labourers under his charge.

"Remember," said his master, impressively, when paying the wages due to him and discharging him from his service, "Remember I have abstained from punishing you at the earnest solicitations of this child; but that if you ever again come before me for any act of theft or fraud, the chastisement will be exemplary." Vinna listened in silent submission, kissed the skirt of Willy's garment, and departed.

For a while the boy missed his kind and pleasant face in the cinnamon plantations and about the home-grounds; but the griefs of childhood are enviably brief, and he had nearly forgotten his old playfellow, when he was thrown unexpectedly in his way, many months afterwards, in a visit paid by hinself and his father, attended by Gatura, to the pearl-fishery at Condatchy.

A gay and pleasant scene was this pearl-fishery. Thousands of persons, of all colours and nations, in the picturesque costumes of the East, from the rich travelling merchants who supply the great jewellers of our European cities, to the poorest of the Cinglese women and children, who hover around the sieves, and pore for days over the heaps of sand which have been thrown aside, in hopes of lighting upon the smallest seedling pearl, crowd the streets of the temporary town (at other times a mere fishing village,) washing, sifting, boring, drilling, squabbling, and bargaining, in every variety of dialect and jargon; all intent upon the beautiful luxury destined to add a costlier splendour to the monarch's crown, or a rarer charm to the brow of beauty.

Willy was delighted; all the more delighted that he had met his old friend Vinna, and that Vinna had been singularly prosperous. A speculating merchant had not only engaged divers on his own account, but had employed persons to examine the sand that had been thrown by after passing, or being supposed to pass, through the sieves. Vinna had been fortunate enough to discover, in a portion which must have been spilled before being subjected to that process, a pear-shaped pearl of such size and beauty, as had not been found off the coast of Ceylon within the memory of the oldest trader connected with the fishery. An agent of the King of Candy, specially dispatched by his royal master for the purpose of obtaining such a jewel, to gratify a fancy expressed by his favourite wife, who wanted such a one to complete a set of ornaments, was at that moment treating for it with his employer. Vinna ran to procure it to show to the boy, and placed it on a crimson shawl to display the shape and colour to the best advantage. At Willy's entreaty, Colonel Pemberton also advanced to admire the treasure, attended by Gatura, who had accompanied them to Condatchy; and a little crowd of merchants and natives gathered round the place, enlarging upon its merits, marvelling at Vinna's good fortune, or rather the extraordinary luck of his employer, and wondering how, by any degree of carelessness, a pearl of such magnitude could have escaped from the sieves.

Whilst these assistants, in the heat of their discussion, stood divided into separate groups, and Colonel Pemberton, at Willy's entreaty, was speaking with a grave and measured kindness to Vinna, his employer and the agent of the King of Candy having concluded their bargain, returned for the pearl. They applied to Vinna, who motioned to the shawl which he had deposited on the top of a high covered basket close behind him. The basket was there, and the shawl, but the pearl was gone! The consternation was general. Vinna wrung his hands in agony; the buyer and seller of the precious commodity were in equal dismay. Every man looked suspiciously on his fellow. Some disclaimed; some accused. Gatura, who had stood nearest to the basket upon which the valuable jewel had been so unhappily left, insisted so vehemently upon being searched, that, rather to pacify him and rid themselves of his clamour, than from any positive mistrust, his dress and person were, as he desired, subjected to a very rigorous examination; nothing, of course, being found that could implicate him in any way in the delinquency.

In the meantime, the less successful adventurers, who had before been loud in the expression of their astonishment that such a pearl could be found in such a manner, began to gather round Colonel Pemberton, to examine into the character which Vinna, whom they understood, from what had passed between them, to have been heretofore employed by him, had borne while in his service. The agent of the King of Candy, the purchaser of the pearl, and the speculator who had sold it, also approached with the same view. Willy, who, child as he was, saw the turn that matters were about to take, seized the opportunity to steal towards his friend.

"Go, Vinna! go!" said Willy; and, with a sudden start, and a momentary pause, Vinna obeyed the injunction. He disappeared among the crowd; and, by the time that the questions that those interested had extracted from Colonel Pemberton the cause of his dismissal, and that two or three of the most determined called out to arrest him, he had made such good use of his time, as completely to baffle every effort of his pursuers; his flight, whilst it saved him from almost inevitable punishment, producing upon every body, except Willy, who did battle manfully in his behalf, the most complete conviction of his guilt. It seemed as certain that he had stolen the pearl,

—perhaps that he had twice stolen it,—as that he had stolen the oil of cinnamon. No one believed in the possibility of his innocence, except our friend Willy.

The boy and his father returned to Negumbo; and, in a little while, the colonel was called away on service; and Mrs. Pemberton being in delicate health, Willy was left much to the care of Gatura, who spared no pains in his endeavour to win the favour of the lively and spirited boy. He constructed a pad, on which to take him before him on a blood horse, belonging to the colonel, and carried him every day upon some excursion to the cocoa groves (or topes,) or the dreary forests which surrounded their habitation. One day he took him to see the manner in which wild elephants are caught; and Willy was delighted with the sagacity and affection displayed by one of the tame ones, who, apparently recognising an old companion in the largest of those that had been ensnared, actually opened the fastenings of the gate for the release of his friend;—thus showing, although enslaved himself, his sense of the value of freedom. Willy was enchanted; and, on Gatura's dwelling upon the grandeur and interest of a buffalo hunt, never ceased importuning the Malay to afford him that gratification.

One fine morning, accordingly, they set forth professedly to witness this remarkable spectacle. The high-bred steed carried them rapidly through the cocoa tope, into the very depth of the forest. No sign appeared of the hunters; but, pleased with the beauty of the scenery, the golden rays of the sun darting through the shaddock and the tamarind, and resting on the beautiful fruit of the jamboe, and amused by the variety of bright-coloured birds and gorgeous butterflies, the boy took no note of the distance. At last, as the day advanced, the claims of hunger began to be felt, and he intimated to Gatura his desire to return home.

"Home!" said the Malay, in the low accent of bitter hate; "you never shall return. Do you remember the day—you, child as you are, may forget; but, on my memory that day is burnt in characters of fire—when for striking this horse, ay, this very horse, as Colonel Pemberton, my master, your father, was pleased to think over hard, he snatched the whip from my hand, and struck me, ay, lashed me with it, as if I had been a beast? I grasped the crease in my bosom; but that would have been a brief and common vengeance. I have waited for such revenge as may endure; and now my hour is come. You, too, young sir! you were pleased to read out of some story-book, to your mother, that pearls might be hidden in the mouth; that stripping the dress, and searching the person, was no security against a skilful thief! Home you shall never come to tell your father that tale, unless, indeed, you can win your way through the beasts and reptiles, the snakes and the panthers, of this forest. Down with you, sir! Do not cling around me in this manner! Let go my sash, or I will cut away those little hands! What noise is that? Off with you, I say!"

And, frightened at some real or imaginary noise, Gatura dashed the struggling child to the earth and rode rapidly away, leaving, in the boy's hands, the shawl sash, by which he had hung so tightly, and which had been folded, after the oriental fashion, round the waist of the Malay. A small packet dropped from it—it was the lost pearl!

Hungry and bewildered as he was, the stout-hearted boy lost neither his courage nor his presence of mind. He pocketed the precious jewel, plucked the unripe fruits to appease the cravings of appetite, and tried, with all his might, to retrace the way by which he had come, and to turn back to his home; but, far beyond his own knowledge, he only plunged deeper and deeper into the forest. He avoided, however, with remarkable boldness and sagacity, the frequent dangers from snakes and wild animals, took refuge under a talipot-tree from a storm, which sent the shrieking flor-mouse to the same friendly shelter; and at night, remembering that the Cinglese sometimes constructed their habitations for security on the branches of trees, he climbed the tall trunk of the cocoa to sleep.

What was the agony of the bereaved mother during that long and solitary night! Gatura had not returned, and, wholly unsuspicious of his treachery, she imagined that some fatal accident had happened to him and to his charge. Messenger after messenger did she despatch in every direction; Colonel Pemberton was recalled; and every means taken that the most anxious affection could dictate, to recover the missing child.

He, meanwhile, wandered on, subsisting on wild fruits by day, and sleeping in trees by night, until he had nearly reached the boundaries of Candy. He, too, poor child, was heart-sick and home-sick. The high courage which he inherited from his father, roused at the approach of danger; but at other moments, foot-sore, weary, bruised by falls, and torn by bushes, his spirits flagged, and his strength was exhausted. One day, as he was passing by some brush-wood, which half concealed the entrance to a low cavern, a furious buffalo came bellowing up a track in the forest, and, pausing for an instant, lowered his head to attack the child. Another moment, and Willy would have been gored by his horns, or tossed into the air; but a man rushed from the cavern, and, seizing the child with one arm, with the other flung a piece of cloth (part of his own garments) over the head of the buffalo, blinding him, and entangling his horns, so that the boy and his preserver had time to retreat into the cave, the entrance to which was too low to admit the enraged animal.

Willy was saved; and, turning to thank the friend to whose boldness and address he owed his life, he burst into tears of delight, clapped his little hands together, and shouted, "Vinna! dear, dear Vinna!"

Three days after this, Vinna, bending in respectful salutation, with his arms folded upon his bosom, stood in the presence of the beautiful wife of the Candian king. She listened to his little story, and listened pityingly, for she was a woman and a mother. She promised, with the grace of conscious power, and nobly did she redeem her promise, to redress all Vinna's grievances, whether as regarded the oil of cinnamon, which she justly suspected Gatura to have stolen, or the pearl; and with regard to that pearl of pearls, the noble boy Willy, she made it her first business, her first pleasure, to send him home to his distracted parents, laden with presents, and accompanied by his brave preserver, the faithful Cinglese.

SCOTLAND.

SIR ALLAN AND HIS DOG.

"Therefore *his* age *was* as a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly."

SHAKSPEARE.

"No, Oscar! no; your young master is deer-stalking to-day. Don't you hear the gun, which has startled Jessy so wofully? He does not want you just now, Oscar. His view, before firing that startling gun, which, wo is me! will have more than frightened the poor, pretty deer; for Allan is such a shot, that he seldom misses his aim,—his view, before he frightened Jessy, and awakened the echoes and brought down the red deer with that sudden shot, was to creep towards them quietly and stealthily. He does not want the good hound, Oscar, to-day! Oscar must stay with his mistress." And as the lovely Agnes Macdonald spoke coaxingly these coaxing words, her small, fair hand thrown around Oscar's neck, as he stood beside her, the noble animal looked up in her face with his bright intelligent eyes, delighting in the sweetness of the voice, comprehending, or seeming to comprehend, the meaning of the words, and acquiescing most contentedly in her decision. There was, certainly, no great hardship in standing at the side of Agnes Macdonald, the beautiful and the kind; and with looks that spoke, as plainly as looks could speak, his affection and his gratitude, her honest and faithful favourite (somewhat of the largest and roughest for a lady's pet,) lay down in calm and quiet happiness at her feet.

Her fair companion, the high-born and graceful Jessy Stewart, who, startled, as Agnes had truly said, at the sudden sound of Allan Macdonald's gun, had been standing in some dismay behind her friend, now that the shock was passed, advanced smilingly, and found a seat upon the bank beside her.

"How fond you are, Agnes, of that huge dog! What would the exquisites who hovered round you in London and in Paris say, if they saw you in full dress, too, not as I am, snooded and plaided like a Highland lassie, with your jewelled hand resting upon that shaggy head, and his long, rough body reclining upon the satin skirt! What would they say to that, 'my dainty leddy,' as old Annot is wont to call you?"

"And what matters what they say or think, Jessy?" responded the warm-hearted maiden, kindling into a dignity of youthful beauty and unconscious stateliness, pure, delicate, and graceful as the attitude of a swan upon the mountain or lake, or the station of a doe amongst her native glens. "What care I for the exquisites of Paris or of London? Not half as much as for the mountain posy which you have been collecting — the harebell, and the heather-sprig, and our own elegant and abundant Scottish rose. What is the worth of a 'wilderness of' *such* 'monkeys,' compared with that of our noble, faithful Oscar? What would be the amount of their services in a whole century, measured with those which he has rendered to us? Why, did you never hear," continued Agnes, observing the surprised look with which her friend regarded her evident excitement; "Did you never hear of poor Oscar's exploits in the hard winter, five years back? No; you were in Germany at the time: and it was before Allan's attachment and your return of affection (nay, Jessy, a princess would have no cause to blush for loving such a man as my brother;) it was before this affiance, so gratifying to us all, had given you a daughter's interest in the affairs of our house. If you are not afraid of a long story, I will tell you why it is that, from the oldest to the youngest, we all consider Oscar, not merely as a noble animal, but as a benefactor and a friend.

"You know the pride and delight of our family, my little sister, Jean; but you did not know the beloved and venerable relative, my dear and excellent grandfather, of whom she was, from the moment she could totter across the room, climb into his lap, and hang prattling round his neck, the prime pet and favourite. He doted upon the sturdy, hardy, merry little girl, with her joyous smile, and her joyous temper, so fearless, open, frank, and kind; and she, in her turn, idolised the fine, cheerful, benevolent old man, her most alert playmate, and most indulgent friend! Oh! how they loved each other! And what a picture it was to see them together! He, at nearly

eighty, still upright, robust and vigorous in form, with a regular, oval countenance, high, noble features, hazel eyes, bright and keen as a falcon's, a mouth of feminine sweetness, a fine open forehead, a magnificent bald head, and long curling hair, as white as the snow on Ben Nevis, contrasting with his clear, ruddy complexion, the very hue of a ripe peach. Oh, what a sight it was to see that beautiful old man, so full of health, and life, and glee, and kindliness, tossing about that rosy, laughing child with the activity of youth! never weary of humouring her pretty fancies, and even going beyond her in innocent mirth, and fun, and frolic. How Jeanie loved him! How we all loved him, the dear and venerable man! so generous and frank, so open-hearted and guileless himself, so unsuspicious of guile in others; so full of honourable thoughts and disinterested and affectionate feelings! How proud we all were of a relative, whose cheerful and venerable age accorded so well with his virtuous and active youth! The Southrons, estimating little except the conventional benefits of wealth or station, are apt to sneer at our pride of ancestry; and perhaps we may a little overvalue that mere string of names, that long roll of parchment, a pedigree; but a progenitor like Sir Allan Macdonald, or as he preferred to be called, Kilburnie,—a living example of all that is true, and just, and honourable, and kind, cannot be too highly appreciated. His family, his clansmen, his very countrymen, were proud of the good old man, whose sweet and genial temperament diffused gaiety and happiness around him. He was a blessing to the whole country. You will be a happy woman, Jessy, if my dear brother, the heir of his estates and his name, should (as Heaven grant he may) fulfil the promise of his youth, and inherit also the frank and winning virtues to which his grandfather owed his extensive and remarkable popularity.

"Sir Allan being a widower, and my mother a widow, she and her three children, Allan, Jeanie, and myself, lived with him at Kilburnie; Jeanie, younger than either of us by ten years, and a posthumous child, being, as I have said, his companion; whilst Oscar, then in his prime, whom my grandfather, still a keen sportsman, valued above all greyhounds for his speed (if my venerable kinsman, in his universal candour and charity, had a prejudice, it was against the sleek, high-bred, fine-limbed dogs, which form the pride of the southern courser, and Oscar had won a cup from a round dozen of competitors from Newmarket, brought on purpose to oppose him), and whom Jeanie delighted in for his gamesomeness, was the constant attendant of their long rambles. In spring, summer, autumn, and winter, in every season, and in all weathers, would the active old man sally forth with the hardy little girl, sometimes holding him by the hand, or when weary carried in his arms, and the good hound, Oscar, bounding on before them. He had an innocent pride in dropping in with Jeanie in his hand at houses at a considerable distance, particularly at the residences of his daughters and grandchildren (for his daughters, older than my father, an only son, and early married, had scattered his descendants over the country), and replying, with a chuckling glee, when questioned about horses and servants, 'that he had walked; that he left such effeminacies as coaches and flunkies to those who needed them, and was ready to dance a reel with the youngest lassie present; and it should go hard but he would tire her down: and Jeanie hersel' will keep it up with any lad of her inches; won't you, Jeanie?' and the vaunt would end by the good old man tossing Jeanie upon his shoulder, and cutting the Highland fling to his own music. This was his delight: a ball was nothing without his presence. If you had but seen the nod and the wink, the fulness of his glee, the overflow of his good-humour, his archness in suspecting, and sagacity in detecting which lad and lassie would like to come together for the dance; ay, and sometimes for longer than the dance! How he would reconcile old feuds, and cement new friendships; ay, and how he would use the influence of age, and character, and property, even to the very stretch of his interest, to smooth difficulties, and turn dim and distant wishes into present realities!—Many a hopeful youth has owed his prosperity, many a gentle maiden her happiness, to the unwearied benevolence of the kind and merry Sir Allan.

"One Christmas he went to Glenmore, accompanied, as usual, by Jeanie and Oscar, to keep the birth-day of his favourite daughter, Lady Macleod. My brother was detained at home by a slight indisposition; and the weather was so severe, that my mother, always delicate, was afraid to venture, I myself being too young for parties of any kind. Sir Allan had fixed to return on New Year's Eve, the succeeding day being always one of high festivity at Kilburnie, the servants and neighbours dining in the great hall, and the whole castle being alive with feasting and jollity. It was an occasion on which we felt that he would be very unwilling to absent himself, and yet the day fixed for his return was so tremendous, that we took for granted Lady Macleod would detain her honoured guest at Glenmore. Snow had fallen during the whole of the preceding night, accompanied by a drifting wind, so that to send carriages and horses was impracticable; every vestige of the road, a wild mountain-track, at the best, was impassable, or my brother would have gone under pretence of fetching Jeanie; for we all knew well, that the only shade that ever crossed the brightness of our dear grandfather's countenance, was occasioned by his suspicion of being taken care of,—an affront which the

hardy sportsman would have regarded with as much jealousy and displeasure as would be evinced by a veteran of the wars at any precaution that should imply a doubt of his personal prowess. This consideration alone deterred my brother from setting forth to Glenmore in person; and as the day grew wilder and wilder, all around, hill, plain, and valley, covered with a sheet of fragile glittering white, with scarcely an hour's intermission of incessant snowfall, and the night closed in with bitter gusts of wind, which blew the frozen and feathery particles against the face with blinding violence, even my mother, a nervous and timorous woman, with a revered parent and a beloved child at stake, made up her mind to believe that, as it was evidently impossible that the expected guests would reach Kilburnie Castle on the morrow, its master would be content to remain where he was. Weather less formidable, so that it might have afforded some chance of his finding the road, or some probability of the arrival of his guests the next day, would have been more alarming. To have stirred out in such a fall as this seemed impossible. So we went to bed in comfort.

"About an hour after midnight we were awakened by a tremendous noise at the gate of the castle, a mixture of scratching and howling. Upon opening the door, it was found to be our friend, Oscar, who, instantly singling out my brother, leaped upon him with a piteous cry, and then went on a little way beyond the gate, returning to see if Allan followed him (who delayed a few minutes to furnish himself with a lantern, and men with hurdles, mattresses, and ropes,) pulling him by the coat-skirts with a most urgent whine, wagging his tail when he began to move, and enticing him forward by every means in his power. Oh, I shall never forget the poor dog's piteous ways, his trembling earnestness, his eager looks, and the expression of his anxious cry—no human voice could have conveyed his meaning more distinctly. Never shall I forget that moment, nor the hour of agonising suspense that followed."

"They were saved?" inquired Jessy, anxiously, breaking silence for the first time.

"Oscar led his party to a hollow by the hill-side, about three miles distant; and there the venerable old man was found leaning against the rock in a half-recumbent posture, so as to shelter the child, who was clasped to his bosom. The snow was gathering around them. Sleep had crept upon both, and, in another hour, all help would have been unavailing."

"But they *were* saved?" again inquired Jessy.

"Thanks to Oscar's fidelity and intelligence, they were. By proper care, they both recovered sufficiently to dance at the postponed festival on Old New Year's Day. Our dear grandfather lived in health and happiness until last year, just before we had the happiness of renewing our friendship with your family; and Jeanie is, you know, as lively and as life-like a little personage as treads this most excellent earth. And now, my dearest Jessy, do you wonder that Oscar—look at him, poor fellow, he knows that we are talking of him! Do you wonder that this noble and sagacious animal should be my pet?"

CASTILE.

THE SIGNAL.

"Mine honour is my life."—SHAKSPEARE.

"BE waiting soon after dark, my dearest Leonora, at the balcony of your apartment, and when you see me holding up a torch in the little boat upon the lake, steal unobserved, if possible, from the castle, and come to meet me at the water side. I must see you; must pour my sorrows into your sympathising bosom; must take leave of you—possibly for ever! Your unhappy brother,

FERNANDO JUAN CARLOS DE GUZMAN."

For the twentieth time, Donna Leonora read her beloved brother's letter, as she stood leaning upon the beautifully carved stone-work of the balcony, watching the appointed signal. Her husband was absent; and the mystery in the delivery of the billet, which had excited the attention of her serving maidens, Livia and Ursula, and had even awakened in their coarser minds,—accustomed to the not unfrequent flirtations of Spanish beauties,—suspicions that their grave and high-minded lady, hitherto so inaccessible and so spotless, was, at last, about to listen at least to one amongst her innumerable admirers. The disguise of the letter-bearer, and the silence and secresy of his own approach, were, as far as Don Pedro was concerned, wholly unnecessary. But Donna Leonora, aware of the untamed,—perhaps untameable—impetuosity of her brother's character (an only and a twin brother, and most fondly beloved), and of his impatience of contradiction, and doubtful, also, how far what she had to hear might be connected with the political convulsions of these troubled times, and certain of her husband's just reliance upon her affection and prudence, resolved to obey implicitly Don Fernando's directions, to wait in the balcony until she perceived the signal-torch, and then to hasten to meet him by the edge of the lake.

As she stood leaning on the carved stone-work, her guitar at her side, the beams of the full-moon striking on her rich jewels and her commanding beauty, and illuminating the splendid mansion, of which she was the un-

disputed mistress (from one of whose opened windows peeped forth the inquisitive and laughing serving-maidens), the contrast—that contrast so frequent in this world of contradictions — between the splendour and gaiety of outward circumstances, and the cares and anxieties of the interior mind, the wide difference, in short, between appearance and reality, was most strikingly exemplified. To the eye she was bright, fair, sweet, and calm, as the flowers clustered in their sculptured vase, that waved above her head, diffusing beauty and fragrance around her; but, as the flower-leaf is subject to influences from without, shaken by the night-wind, and battered by the rain, so is that sentient and delicate blossom, the human heart, liable to be swayed by the changeful gusts of passion and feeling; and, even when in itself equable and firm, it is but too often torn and shattered by sympathy with the sufferings and injuries of the objects of its best affections. And so it fared with the gentle Leonora at this moment, when, awakening from a long revery, occupied in vain guesses as to the purport of the letter which lay by her side, she glanced suddenly down towards the lake, and saw the signal-torch gleaming high above the waters.

In a few minutes the brother and sister were standing together, in earnest conversation beneath a group of cedar, and cypress, and Portugal laurel, through whose dark foliage the moonbeams struck in bright fitful gleams, as the cool breeze of evening swayed the huge branches.

"He insulted me, Leonora, before the whole regiment: called me a rash, hot-headed boy; and when I sent the young Conde de Merida to him, to demand an apology, or to appoint the time and weapons for a meeting, he refused to listen to him or answer him, otherwise than by saying that his regard for my father's memory, his old comrade in arms, alone prevented him from putting me under arrest for sending a challenge to my superior officer; and that for this time he forgave me, but that I had need look to it, for that the next breach of discipline should be visited upon me with all the rigour of military law. And this from Manuel Hernandez to a descendant of the house of Guzman! And he survives, and I survive! And all redress is closed against me by military discipline, forsooth! Military discipline!!! Well, I have removed that barrier, have thrown up my commission; and if, upon my return to Madrid, he refuses me the satisfaction which I require, I will leave Spain—leave Europe! The world does not want in ways in which the son of an old Castilian, even if he abandon his estates, his rank, his country, may win for himself enough to maintain life, without forfeiting that without which life is worthless—honour."

"Alas! my dearest Fernando! my most dear brother!" exclaimed Donna Leonora, in the deepest affliction; "can you speak thus of leaving your country, of abandoning the princely name and the princely home of your ancestors, of deserting now, in the moment when she most needs the defence of every loyal cavalier, the young and innocent sovereign, in the assertion of whose rights you took so vivid an interest;—above all, can you think of forsaking me! True, I have a kind and an honourable husband; but even his affection would not suffice for my happiness, if you, the playmate of my childhood, the companion and friend of my maturer years, my twin brother, my only living relation, were to become a wanderer and an exile! Speak to my husband, Fernando; he, too, is a soldier, and a noble Castilian! Consult him. What was the commencement of this unlucky quarrel? Don Manuel Hernandez has a lovely daughter, the Donna Serafina, respecting whom he is known to be singularly tenacious. Surely, her name was not mentioned between ye?"

"His daughter, quotha!" replied the fiery youth. "I never saw her, have hardly heard that such a person existed! Don Diego Velasquez and myself were speaking of a stranger, clearly a lady of distinction, a beauty whom we had met together on the Prado, and whom I had subsequently seen, oftener indeed than I cared to tell him, at early mass at the church of San Isidro. He dared to compare with this angel, pure, dignified, gracious, and graceful;—I have never spoken to her, but I am *sure* that she is all this; there is an evidence of bearing and of countenance, to say nothing of the careful attendance of two old domestics, whose appearance vouches for the station and character of their mistress;—he dared to compare with *her* a Jewish girl, picked up in some of the alleys of the city; and it was my indignation at this insult, offered to a virtuous lady, which provoked the interference of Colonel Hernandez, who had entered unobserved during the dispute. Don Diego apologised. He is a slight boy; a trivial jester, who would crack jokes at his mother's death-bed, or his father's tomb: but Hernandez! And to refuse me all explanation! all redress! To disgrace me before my comrades, and then to stand upon his seniority! his military discipline! 'The day would come,' he said, 'when I should repent my violence.' Death will arrive before that day! Farewell, my Leonora! Women cannot comprehend these feelings! Schooled before all his officers! And he expects that I shall submit! that I shall rejoin the regiment, to be pardoned, it may bé! or to be schooled again! By St. Jago, the gentleman is modest! Farewell, my precious sister, my own Leonora! May the Holy Virgin watch over you! Forget me, my best Leonora; I can never forget you!" And he broke from her affectionate embrace, leaped into the boat that awaited him, and rowed

rapidly to the opposite shore; where Jose, his faithful domestic, attended with his horses.

The weather was singularly fine even for that delicious climate. The moon, nearly at full, reigned in the clear and deep-blue sky like a milder sun, throwing a silvery light upon the wild and beautiful scenery, the deep and richly-wooded glens, threaded by mountain streams, and surmounted by the abrupt precipices and rugged steeps of Sierra Guadarrama, into the defiles of which a few hours' riding had now brought them. Even the stormy passions of man were insensibly soothed by the peaceful sights and the harmonious sounds of nature, the calm sweetness of the night, the lulling sound of the wind amongst the willows, the distant fall of waters gushing from a rock, and the balmy odours of the cistuses, the wild thyme, and the thousand aromatic herbs that sprang around him on every side. Unconsciously, his anger was yielding to milder thoughts, as he wended his way, taking, at the guidance of Jose, or the will of his steed, the nearest but least-frequented road to Madrid, when, on emerging from a grove of cork-trees, and entering a strait and narrow valley, where the rude cart track wound between tall and almost inaccessible crags, celebrated as the resort of the banditti, formed in these times of civil war by the refuse of either army, he was startled from his meditations by the repeated sound of a pistol-shot, and the shrill screams of female voices; and saw right before him, in the moonlight, a carriage drawn by mules with one or two unarmed attendants, who, overpowered by superiority of numbers, and the suddenness of the attack, were on the point of surrendering to half-a-dozen ferocious-looking savages, armed to the teeth, who were so intent on their booty, that they did not perceive the new-comers.

"Carry off the trunks, Pablo! Take care of the lady, Joachim! She looks like one for whom we may demand good ransom!" cried the ruffian, who seemed to be their leader.

The reply to this injunction was a shot from Fernando's pistol, which levelled the wretch to the earth. The faithful Jose seconded his master; the driver of the carriage and the attending servants, encouraged by the unexpected succour, rallied round their lady; and, in a few minutes, the assailants, dismayed by the loss of their captain, and alarmed also by the sound of horses advancing along the highway, fled the field.

Don Fernando advanced to the trembling and frightened travellers, (for they were two females ensconced in the calèche,) whom he had rescued from worse than death.

"The beauty of the Prado!" cried he, in ecstasy. "The lovely devotee of San Isidro!"

"Serafina, my beloved daughter!" exclaimed the newly-arrived cavalier, joining the group; "and you, señor, her protector, her preserver, how can we repay such services? Don Fernando! Is it, indeed, Don Fernando de Guzman?"

"Colonel Hernandez!" and, without their at all knowing how it happened, the two brave hands were joined in the most cordial grasp of affectionate amity.

"Well, is this not better, now, than fighting for neither could tell what?" said Don Manuel, after a few minutes passed in the warmest expressions of gratitude on the part of the father and daughter. "You will understand, my good young friend, that I had heard enough of your conversation with Don Diego, to be convinced that you were speaking of Serafina, without exactly knowing the degree or the manner of your acquaintance with her. This occasioned my taking up the matter with undue warmth. Upon discovering, however, how matters stood, I was actually on my way to your excellent sister, Donna Leonora, to commission her to mediate between us; and, as you confess to having left her in some trouble, why, I think, with your permission, we had better proceed thither now. She will forgive our untimely visit for the sake of its object."

There is little need to say with how much delight Don Fernando acceded to this proposition, or how much more delicious the silver light of the moon, the lulling sound of wind and waters, and the balmy scent of the herbs, which hung heavy with the nightdew from the romantic defiles of the sierra Guadarrama, seemed to the lover, when traversed at the side of his beloved.

It was long past midnight when they arrived at the castle, to the unspeakable pleasure of its fair mistress, and a little to the disappointment of her waiting-maids, who found to their no small amazement, that the cavalier of the signal-torch was no other than their lady's twin brother.

THE RETURN FROM THE FAIR.

"For love, thou knowest, is full of jealousy."
SHAKSPEARE.

It was on a bright balmy evening towards the end of July, that half the population of this sunny side of Berkshire were pouring through the suburbs of Belford Regis, on their return from the annual festival, popularly called the Cherry Fair, because it forms the great mart for the wagon-loads of that luscious fruit, which blacken the orchards, skirt the beech woods, and dot the commons, of that wild and beautiful tract of country which runs along the northern banks of the Thames. Carriages of every variety, from the lordly landau (our story bears date some thirty years back), with its

four prancing steeds and its liveried outriders, to the humble caravans crowded with women and children, already fretful from the fatigue which, in lower as in higher life, treads so close upon the heels of pleasure; all sorts of wheeled vehicles—chariots, phaetons, curricles, gigs, and carts, horsemen of every rank, and foot-people of all ages and denominations; some tipsy, some sober, some merry, some sad, all came pouring from the fair; and the stir and movement of the different groups, the sounds of so many passengers, talking, laughing, hallooing, and whooping, mingled with the distant noises of the scene of action, where the ringing of bells, the beating of drums, the lowing of cattle, and the blowing of trumpets, contended with, and at times nearly overpowered, the mingled hum of the multitude, formed a scene, which, lighted by the bright beams of a midsummer sun, and fanned by the pleasant evening breeze, had something peculiarly exhilarating in its aspect and character. Standing upon the hill which parts Belford Regis from Aberleigh, and looking towards the old town, its towers and steeples glittering in the sunshine, its venerable buildings mingled with groves and gardens, and crowned with terraces of a lighter and gayer style of architecture, the clear waters of the Kennet spanned by noble bridges and crowded with barges and pleasure vessels, whilst river, bridges, streets, and quays, were all alive with the gay and stirring population, rolling its apparently inexhaustible tides upward from the good town, and then onward through broad avenues and tufted lanes, into the neighbouring country beyond; looking from this point, it was scarcely possible for the coldest observer not to be gratified by a spectacle so full of innocent although somewhat boisterous, gaiety, and wide-spreading enjoyment.

Among the most gratified of these spectators was a somewhat stern-looking dame, who sat in her own porch before a small farm-house, just without the suburbs of Belford Regis, and took off her spectacles, and laid aside her knitting, to survey her pretty grand-daughter Susan, who, followed by two fine boys, her brothers, one beating most lustily a child's drum, the other shouldering with great pride and valour a toy musket, approached slowly from the fair.

Susan Wharton was one of the prettiest lasses of the country side, and her sweetness and modesty equalled her beauty. She and her brothers were orphans brought up by her father's mother, the venerable matron of the knitting needle and the spectacles, who, having a small but excellent pasture-farm close to the town, and being an active, stirring, bustling dame, accomplished in all the arts of the dairy, contrived to make a good living for herself and her grand-children by supplying the inhabitants with cream, milk, butter, and other pastoral luxuries. Lone woman though she were, the world had gone well with her, and she had scarcely known a care since the sudden and almost simultaneous death of her son and her son's wife, except indeed the dread occasioned by the perversity and headstrong temper of Robert Owen, her pretty grand-daughter's favoured suitor, who, whenever a fit of jealousy came across him, which was far oftener than ought to have occurred considering the reserve and prudence of his fair mistress, (but when did jealousy listen to reason?) was sure to avenge himself by threatening to turn soldier; a threat of all others most grievous to Dame Wharton's ears, whose eldest grand-son, having enlisted during his father's life, had thereby occasioned to his affectionate relatives a species of trouble and anxiety unknown in the traditions of that peaceful family since the time of a certain Rupert Wharton, some great-great-great-grand-father of poor James, who had followed the fortunes of his illustrious namesake, and fallen in the king's service during the civil wars.

Jem's delinquency, and the threat to follow his example so frequently held out by Robert Owen, had so strongly impressed Dame Wharton's imagination, that her natural pride and pleasure at the sight of her blooming grand-children was somewhat lessened by the martial array in which the two boys presented themselves.

"I suppose it 's some foolish present of Robert Owen's," said the good dame to her faithful adherent, Jenny Stubbs, a short damsel, who assisted in the care of the cows as well as in carrying milk and butter about the town, and had been left to attend her mistress during the absence of her grandchildren; "It 's certainly some folly of Robert's, for I am sure that Susan would never have given the boys such nonsensical toys fit only to put war, and soldiering, and such-like wild notions into their heads, poor children! But where is Robin?" added she, as Susan approached; "and what ring is that upon your finger? You have not gone to church without leave or license, to be sure, Susan, now that all 's arranged for your being married at Christmas, when Robert is settled in his own little farm? I wonder what his uncle, Master Owen, the cooper, who has been as good as a father to him, would say to that. Speak, child, can't you? Are you married?—yes or no? or has Robin bought the ring beforehand, and got you to put it on in this way to make a fool of your old grandmother?"

"No, indeed," returned Susan; "I would not have done any thing so disrespectful to you, grandmother, for twenty Robins. This is no wedding-ring."

"No?" said her grandmother, assuming her spectacles to take a second view of the slender finger and the glittering gem which encircled it; and, comparing both with her own hard, ruddy hand. "No!" exclaimed she, eyeing

it more attentively, "this gimcrack isn't such a ring as I was married with. But why dost wear it upon thy wedding-finger, child? and who gave it to thee? Eh! Robin? Ah! he's a foolish boy to throw away so much money. I warrant it cost a good half-guinea. And the boys and their nonsense! Ah! those young heads! I warrant he's been finely cheated! Robert bought it in the fair?"

"No indeed, grandmother!" responded Susan.

"Not Robert! who then?" inquired Dame Wharton, with great sternness. "How dare you accept a present from any one else? Ah, child! child! she that takes rings from fresh acquaintance little deserves that an honest man should seek to put one upon her wedding-finger. Who gave it to you, hussy? speak, I say! Who gave you the ring?"

"I must not tell you his name, dear grandmother," began Susan with great agitation; "I have promised not to tell! You wrong me, grandmother! indeed you do!" sobbed the weeping beauty. "It was no fresh acquaintance! Indeed, indeed, it was not! but I cannot tell his name. I have promised not to tell any one, not even Robert or you!"

"Athk me," interrupted the young gentleman with the musket, interposing between his angry grandmother and his frightened sister, with an alacrity and boldness of bearing, which together with his readiness and shrewdness of speech contrasted laughably with an infantine lisp from which Ned, his younger brother, (he of the drum,) was perfectly free.

"Athk me, gwandmother, and don't thcold poor thither Thuthan! Athk me; I know the whole thtowy," pursued Master Willy, shifting his weapon most energetically with both hands from shoulder to shoulder.

"Brother Jem the soger's come to Belford!" bawled Ned, shouting at the top of his voice to overcome the noise of his own drum.

"Yeth," resumed Willy, "when bwother Dzem put the wing on thither Thuthan'th finger he pwomethed to make me a dwummer, a weal dwummer, not a tham, like Ned, but a weal dwummer."—

"And me a fifer!" shouted Ned, still accompanying himself with his noisy instrument.

"Ath thoon ath ever I wath ath tall ath a muthket; pwovided," resumed this discreet keeper of secrets, "pwovided we never thaid a thyllable of hith being at the fair! A weal dwummer! think of that!"

"And a real fifer!"

"Dwummer and fifer, fifer and dwummer," shouted the boys in chorus! "And bwother Dzem can make me a dwummer," added Master Willy, in a confidential whisper addressed to his grandmother, "for he'th a therdzeant and wearth a thwath!—a therdzeant with a thilk thwath!"

"Not silk!" interposed Ned—"worsted."

"Thilk, I thay!" rejoined Willy.

And the one beating a grand tattoo, and the other shouldering arms, off the two boys marched, each shouting at the top of his childish voice. "Thilk!" "Worsted!"—"Worsted!" "Thilk!" until the sound was lost in the distance.

"Jem a serjeant! and at Belford! But why not come here, Susan? and why desire you to keep his being here a secret? I don't see any wisdom in such secrets," said the good dame, shaking her head. "And poor Robin, what 'll he say I wonder? And why does Jem desire you to wear this foolish ring? It 's enough to make the lad enlist in good earnest."

"Why, dear grandmother, that 's the very thing that Jem wants; not that he should enlist in reality, grandmother; not that he should go for a soldier; but, to cure him of these threats and jealousies. Somebody told James, who came to Belford this morning recruiting, how foolish Robin had been about Harry Goddard and George Elton, and everybody who spoke to me or looked at me, whether I spoke to them or not. So when I met him, and—oh dear, grandmother, what a fine stately man he is grown—and when he found me out (for he hardly knew me at first,) and had kissed me and hugged the boys—how pleased he was with Willy—he insisted on my taking this ring, which he received from some great lady to whom he had done a service abroad, and brought it here that it might be sold and serve for my marriage portion: he insisted on my wearing it on my wedding-finger, and not satisfying Robin's curiosity farther than by telling him solemnly that no lover gave it to me; so that either he might put such a trust in my word and my truth as a husband ought to put—or, if that were too good to happen, that he might enlist in James's own party, and so be let off to-morrow after having a good fright. I was not willing to play poor Robin such a trick; for you know, dear grandmother, there was little chance if he saw the ring but he would fly off; only James insisted on the misery of a jealous husband—and so—"

"And so Robert did see the ring, and did fly off? I thought something was amiss when you came home without him," said the grandmother.

"Yes!" sighed Susan, "he did see the ring, poor fellow! as soon as ever he rejoined me: he had been to help his aunt and cousins into their cart when I met James: he did see the ring, and asked me over and over again how I came by it, and who gave it to me. Willy and Ned were gone with James to see Punch and the wild beasts, or else—but I had promised James not to tell. And, thank heaven, Robert said nothing of enlisting this time. So that I hope all will go right."

"Heaven send it may!" said her careful grandame; "but I love no secrets, and playing at enlisting is playing with edge tools. Heark-

en, Susy! if Robert should come here to-night, send him to me. I must go see after the skimming!" and with a nod as eloquent as Lord Burleigh's, the good dame repaired to her dairy.

Susan, although somewhat comforted by Dame Wharton's last speech, could not quite get rid of certain apprehensions that clung about her. She hummed unconsciously her grandmother's favourite ditty—

> "I hate the drum's discordant sound,
> Parading round, and round, and round"—

whenever the distant noise of the recruiting party reached her from the town, or the din of poor Ned's new toy echoed through the mansion; and over and over again did she lament the attractions of Punch, and of the lions, elephants, and monkeys which had detained Willy from her side at a moment when his genius for explanations would have been invaluable to her unhappy lover; for, accustomed to love Robert, faults and all, and almost persuaded to consider his rash and violent, but often repented and easily appeased jealousy, as a proof of the strength of his passion, the soft-hearted beauty was more alive to the danger of losing her betrothed than to the peril in which this solitary failing might place her future happiness. She even contemplated the possibility of sending Willy in quest of her luckless swain; but again the great show of the wild beasts stood in her way. It had so happened that poor Robin himself, always generous, especially to the boys whom their sister loved so dearly, had presented them the Christmas before with a Dutch toy called Noah's Ark, consisting of a curiously fashioned compound of boat and house, filled not merely with the quaintly habited wooden figures representing the Patriarch's family, attired with an amplitude of apparel and a splendour of colouring which did honour to the Hollander's fancy, but with a variety of pairs of animals decked in hues almost as splendid and quite as unlike nature as those with which the Dutch artist had bedecked our antediluvian progenitors. Over this toy, preserved for them with great care by their grandmother, the young students in natural history were quietly seated, so deeply engaged in comparing those beasts which they had seen in the morning with their wooden prototypes in the Ark (where by the way they were most inartificially stowed one above the other, the receptacle being scarcely capable of containing them when shoved in en masse, whence divers accidents to leg and tail, head and horn,) that nothing short of a proposal to revisit Signor Polito's menagerie could have stirred them.

> "I hate yon drum's discordant sound,
> Parading round, and round, and round,"

half sung, half sighed, poor Susan.

> "I hate yon dwom'th dithcordant thound,
> Pawading wound, and wound, and wound,"

gaily echoed Master Willy.

"No, Ned," added the young gentleman, snatching from the boy's hand a mutilated nondescript, minus three legs, one tail, and half a head, and proffering in its place another monster cut asunder in the middle like Baron Munchausen's horse, and presenting a formidable horned head and two fore-legs, sans the body and hind quarters usually found in quadrupeds of all descriptions.

"That'th a mithtake. Thith ith the other theep."

"That!" rejoined Ned, "that's as red as Cherry's calf. It's a lion."

"A lion!" repeated Willy contemptuously; "a lion with hornth! Look at the wam'th hornth! Thithter Thuthan, look! It'th a wam. Thee the hornth. Gwandmother callth Dzonth the thaddler ath cwooked ath a wam'th horn. It'th a wam, Thuthan! thome theep are black, and thome may be wed. Ith n't it a wam, Thuthan? Ith n't Ned wong?"

Susan suggested that, so far as could be judged from the relics of the animal, both were probably mistaken, those interesting remains bearing most resemblance to a cow—an undignified solution of the enigma which united both disputants against their fair referee; and Dame Wharton returning from the dairy, and summoning the boys to supper and to bed, Susan reluctantly abandoned all hope, for that evening at least, of undeceiving her devoted but irascible lover.

Before dawn the next morning the young damsel, who slept in a small chamber of which the casement overhung the garden, heard a low tap at her window, accompanied by the peculiar bird-like whistle which had so often summoned the rustic Juliet, late and early, to the brief delight of a stolen dialogue with her enamoured Romeo.

Wrapping a large cloak about her, Susan stood leaning her hand against the open window.

"Robin! dear Robin!"

Robert could not see the rosy lips which spoke these few and simple words; but the tone, sweet, gentle, caressing, affectionate, implied all that could be imagined of truth and tenderness. It was a tone as sweet and open as her own sweet smile. He mustered all his indignation to resist the charm, and succeeded.

"I come here, Susan," said Robert, in low resolute accents, "to ask you for the last time, from whom, and for what purpose, you received the ring which I saw you wear yesterday? By heaven, I see it now glittering in the moonlight. Answer this question, or we part for ever."

"It is a question, Robin, which I have promised not to answer at present. I can only tell you that I received it from no one

who can interfere with our attachment. More I must not, cannot tell."

"Must not! cannot! say will not!" rejoined Robert, in a voice of deep and concentrated anger. "Say will not, Susan! Once again, and for the last time, I ask you this plain question,—From whom did you receive that gew-gaw? Answer! or may my right hand be struck off before I place the wedding-ring on your finger!"

"Oh, dearest Robin! grant me but a few short hours. Believe my word, dear Robert. Confide in my affection, in my faith!" exclaimed the poor girl, as her lover turned furiously away; "or ask my grandmother," added she; "or inquire of Willy; they are bound by no promise," continued she, not regarding in her anxiety how much she was infringing her own. But if she did break her word, it was to little purpose; the jealous lover fled from the garden, unhearing or unheeding; and although no threat of enlisting had been spoken, no farewell had been breathed, she remained persuaded that he had taken his measures, and with something very like a presentiment that her brother's hasty plan would, as deception, however well intended, often does, lead to evil rather than to good. And so it proved.

Before noon on the next day James Wharton learnt that Robert Owen had enlisted the night before, not with his party, but with one belonging to another regiment stationed in Belford for the occasion of the fair; that, immediately upon ascertaining that Susan still refused to answer his question, he repaired to *his* Serjeant Kite to announce his continued desire to enter the service; that as soon as admittance could be obtained he had been examined and attested before the mayor and other magistrates; and that he and the recruiting party were by that time some miles on their way to the dépôt of the regiment. It was in the very heat of the peninsular war; men were scarce, especially men so tall and finely formed, so spirited and so active as poor Robert. It was impossible to procure his release, and James and his sister were left to bewail the ill consequences of his unlucky experiment, and Dame Wharton to lament, again and again, the evil destiny which led her descendants, and those connected with them, to go, as she phrased it, a *sogering*. The only comfort she derived upon the occasion (next perhaps to that general scolding of the guilty and the innocent, the efficacy of which as a consolation under affliction is well known to most ancient dames well to do in the world, who wear spectacles, knit stockings, and love their own way), her prime comfort consisted in cutting Ned's drum to pieces, to the great improvement of the tranquillity of the rustic homestead, and in throwing Willy's musket into the fire.

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Years passed away. The poor boys, grown into fine stout lads, tended the cows and carried the milk through the streets of Belford Regis; exhibiting no more dangerous warlike propensities than an inordinate ambition on the part of Willy to possess a gun for the purpose of shooting sparrows. Nothing had been heard of Robert: and James Wharton, now serjeant-major of his regiment, remained at a distance, sharing the perils and the victories of the British army. Still, however, Dame Wharton, all peaceful as were her inclinations, had the ill luck to find the destinies of those she loved unexpectedly influenced by the warlike spirit of the times. Poor Susan, restless and unhappy at home, had entered into the service of her noble landlord's daughter, as her own woman; and during the short peace which preceded Napoleon's return from Elba, the lady Anne had been wooed and won by one of the gallant staff which surrounded the great Duke; and, too much attached to her husband to remain at a distance from the field of action, the young bride and her favourite waiting-maid were actually waiting in Brussels during the crowning victory of Waterloo.

* * * * * * *

"You are a soldier's sister, Susan," said the lady Anne to her attendant, with her usual sweet grace, a few days after the great battle; "have you any objection to go with me this morning to the military hospital? A private belonging to my husband's division threw himself between him and a French cuirassier who was about to cut him down with his sabre, and received the blow destined for Sir Charles. Of course every care has been taken of him, and he is likely to recover, poor fellow, thank heaven! but I wish to carry him a few comforts, and to see with my own eyes that he is kindly attended, and thank him with my own lips for preserving a life dearer than my own. Charles has sent to the surgeon to be in waiting: so order the carriage, and we will set forth."

Laden with comforts and restoratives, mistress and maid proceeded to the hospital, neither of them perhaps quite prepared for the inevitable horrors of the scene. Crowds of soldiers, for the most part severely wounded, filled the apartment into which they were ushered. Pain and Death seemed busy around them. Sufferings, only the more affecting for the bravery with which they were borne, spoke in every countenance. Young, timid, and softly-nurtured, the lady Anne, overcome by such a realisation of the miseries of war as her imagination, ever so close to the scene, had hardly pictured, delivered to the friendly surgeon a slip of paper upon which the name of her husband's preserver was written. He led the way to a bed near a window.

"Poor fellow! his wars are over! Nay, nay, your Ladyship must not misunderstand me. His life is in no danger; but he has

been compelled to submit to amputation: and as his friends are said to be well off, why the empty sleeve, in his case, will be only—"

His speech was here checked by a sudden exclamation, almost a shriek, from his patient.

"Susan! Susan Wharton! my Susan!"

"Robin! dear Robin!"

Lady Anne knew the story, and witnessed the recognition with the sympathy of a young unpractised heart. She too had loved a soldier; and the poor sufferer now before her had received his hurt in that dear soldier's defence. Tears contended with smiles as she gazed upon the couple, already reunited, for Susan was hanging over the couch, and her hand was locked in that of Robert. He looked at her wedding-finger; the ring was gone.

"Robin! dear Robin!" Her voice failed her.

"I know what you would say. Susan!" replied poor Robert. "It was your brother James. We met in Spain, and he told me the whole truth. Do you remember my wicked vow? I am a poor maimed object now, Susan: I have no right hand to put the wedding-ring upon that dear finger—"

"But you can put the ring on with the left, dear Robin! You can put it on with the left!" said Susan, smiling through her tears: and never, in spite of pain, and wounds, and danger, and suffering, throbbed two happier hearts than those of the reconciled lovers, in the crowded wards of the Brussels hospital.

THE RUSTIC TOILET.

"To hold the plough for her sweet love."
SHAKSPEARE.

A PLEASANT and a stirring scene was the barn-yard of Farmer Holden of Hilton, one of the principal tenants of our friend Colonel Lisle of that ilk (if it be permitted to a Southron to borrow that expressive phrase,) on one of the pleasantest and sunniest evenings of this last most sunny month of April, when, as if to overset all the calculations of all the almanac-makers from Mr. Murphy downward, and in direct defiance of those safer general prognostics derived from old experience, there has not fallen in this fair county of Berks, from the first to the thirtieth, one single drop of rain. A bright and a lively scene did the barn-yard of Hilton Great Farm exhibit on that bright April evening. Seen between the large wheat-ricks and bean-stacks and hay-ricks, the barns and stables, the cart-houses, hen-houses, and pig-sties, which, together with the old-fashioned rambling dwelling house, large enough to form two or three fine cottages ornées in these degenerate days; seen between the various buildings which with all conceivable irregularity surrounded the spacious farm-yard, glittering with the clean crisp covering of straw with which it was very literally littered, and giving due token of their presence by bleatings of lambs seeking their mothers and ewes in pursuit of their lambs, by barking of dogs and shouting of men and boys, were the fine flocks of Farmer Holden returning from their distant pastures to the fold in a rich meadow near the homestead; horses mounted by young carter-boys sitting loungingly upon their naked backs, and riding them to and from the village pond with an indescribable air of lazy pride; whilst cows, driven by urchins on foot somewhat brisker, but every whit as dirty, stumbled amongst the sheep and jostled the horses in their haste to reach the calves, who were lowing in their pens eager for the moment that should at once appease their own "pleasant enemy Hunger," and relieve the "mothers of the herd" of their milky burthen.

Mingled with these larger comers and goers, biped and quadruped, together with occasional passers-by, as the thresher or seedsman flung himself heavily over the threshold of the barn, or the ploughman stalked from the stable to the hay-rick, were innumerable lesser denizens of this well peopled agricultural demesne. Pigs of all ages and all sizes lay wallowing about the yard; and poultry of every denomination, from geese and turkeys to bantams and pigeons, cackled at the barn doors, dabbled in the ponds, fluttered discontented in the coops, or perched in happy freedom on the roofs of the different buildings; whilst one or two small and pretty children, one with a kitten in its hand, leaning eagerly over the low hatch-gate which extended from side to side of the deep old porch, as if longing to escape from this their peculiar coop, added to the general agreeableness of the picture. Sweetbriar in its tender green and its fresh fragrance grew on one side of that old dark porch, and an early honeysuckle, already putting forth its buds, flourished on the other. July-stocks, wall-flowers, and polyanthuses sent their sweet breath through the lattice windows, divided by rich stone mullions; a large cherry-tree waved its snowy blossoms, scattering light at one end of the house, backed by a rich rosy-tinted almond-scented orchard, whilst in a nook between a dark fagot-pile, and a huge open cart-house, the sun glanced upwards on an old elder tree, turning the trunk into gold, and the wide spreading branches drooping with the weight of the redundant foliage and the swelling flower-buds into pendent emeralds; the clouds were white and fleecy, the sky of the brightest and purest blue, and the woody uplands which formed the framework of the scenery full of hedge-row timber just putting forth its youngest and most delicate "greenth."

A gay and a pretty picture was that crowded farm-yard, and yet the two principal figures

still remain undescribed. Seated upon a low wooden stool, engaged in the operation of administering certain small pellets of dough to some three-score of callow, gaping, struggling goslings—(in the pure Doric of Berkshire this operation is called "pilling the gulls,")—was a young woman of middle height, whose person, sufficiently well formed but somewhat large-boned and muscular, betokened such a union of activity and strength as might probably be more common in the weaker sex if the bountiful intentions of Nature were duly seconded by education and circumstance—if girls took more exercise and passed more time in the open air. Her face could hardly be called pretty, far less beautiful; and yet the bright laughing eyes, the red lips just enough divided to show the pearly teeth, and a dimple at one corner of the mouth, the clear healthy sunburnt complexion, and an expression compounded of frankness, sweetness and gaiety, there was more of charm than is often to be found in the most regular beauty. And so in good truth thought her companion.

She, from her occupation and her dress, her dark cotton gown, her double muslin handkerchief, her simple cap, as well as the sleeves turned up above the elbows, and the coloured apron tied over her white one, was evidently a farm-house serving-maiden just tidied up after going through the most laborious of her many offices, and finishing her day's work by supplying the manifold wants of her feathered charges, and milking the kine, if indeed the calves did not spare her the trouble. He, a fine-looking young man, rather tall than short, but firmly and vigorously formed, with a bright open countenance and a glowing complexion, was as evidently a farmer's son. His straw hat was placed rather on one side on his glossy auburn curls, with the true air of a village beau, and his dark velveteen jacket and the silk handkerchief just knotted round his throat had as much of real study in the apparent carelessness of their adjustment as would have done honour to the veriest coxcomb of one-and-twenty that ever danced at Almack's—personal vanity being astonishingly alike in all stations. A coxcomb, I grieve to say, was Maurice Elliott; and yet, being heartily in love, he had the best chance that could befall him of getting rid of his coxcombry. At present, however, to judge by the dialogue passing between them, their "course of true love" was very far from "running smooth." It was more like a game of cross purposes than a meeting at sunset between two lovers.

"You won't go with me, then, to the Maying, Phœbe?" said the youth impatiently, twisting round his fingers a long supple branch which he had just twitched from a weeping willow that overhung the goose-pond, never dreaming the while that he was, so far as action went, emulating one of the most eloquent women that ever graced blue stockings. "You won't go with me to the Maying?"

"You won't try for a prize at the ploughing-match, Maurice? You really won't try? really and indeed you won't?" rejoined the damsel, poking one of her pellets with a little stick down a gosling's throat, and following the dose by a drop or two of water to clear the passage for another morsel. "Do try, Maurice!" continued she in a tone of voice sweet and round and youthful,—a spoken smile. "Do try!"

"When I know," cried Maurice, still twisting the unlucky bit of willow, "that you have got leave to go out that very day! Of course to the Maying! and not to go with me!" And Maurice gave the bit of willow which he had twisted round his finger such a tug with his other hand as had nearly cut that useful member to the bone. "Got leave to go, and won't go with me!"

"When you won't try at the plough—"

"Hang the ploughing-match!" ejaculated Maurice, shaking his discomfited finger; "Hang the ploughing-match!"

"When you won't try for a prize," continued Phœbe, quietly taking another gosling upon her lap, "you who know that you can plough as straight a furrow as old Giles Dowling himself!"

"Hang Giles Dowling, Phœbe! my father was a farmer, and though, to please him, and since his death, to humour mother, I may have gone between the stilts, there's no need to let myself down in the eyes of the whole parish. What would that cold sneering purse-proud uncle of mine and his fine daughters say, I wonder? Come, Phœbe, don't look so grave—you'll go to the Maying, won't you? What can hinder you, now that you have got leave? Come, and I'll drive you in my own chaise-cart with my new chestnut horse."

"What would your proud uncle and your fine cousins say to that, I wonder? You are a farmer's son, as you truly say, Mr. Maurice Elliott, and I am a labourer's daughter. God forbid that I should be ashamed of being the child of an honest man, let his condition be ever so poor!" and Phœbe, though her tone was gentle, drew her stool a little back with an air of self-respect that approached to dignity.

Her lover felt the reproof.

"Forgive me, dearest Phœbe! pray, pray forgive me! I did not intend—I did not dream—oh! Phœbe, I never think of you but as one so much better than myself! you do forgive me then?" said he, answering the bright dimpled smile which required no words to confirm her pardon. "You do forgive me, and you'll let me drive you to this Maying? We are to have a cricket-match and a dance, and it will be so pretty a sight! Why do you shake your head? Is there any secret in the matter?"

"No secret at all, Maurice," said Phœbe.

"I'll tell you the truth; you'll not be ashamed of it, though your fine cousins would. Poor Uncle George has been so ill this spring that he has not been able to get his allotment dug or planted, and you know the allotment-ground is his chief dependence. The children would be half starved without the vegetables, and the refuse keeps the pig. So father and mother are going to give him a day's labour to get in the potatoes, and I'm going to help. That's my holiday, and a very happy one it will be. Uncle George was always so good to me, and so was aunt, and I love the children dearly. You'll see what a day's work I shall do."

"Dear good Phœbe! I wish I could help too; only I have promised to make one of the eleven, and I can't desert them just at last. But I'll tell you what I can do. Your little cousin George, who lives with us, I can let him go home and help."

Another bright smile repaid the kindness.

"But this ploughing-match, Maurice! that will be a pretty sight too! and you, who can do every thing better than the other lads of the parish, why should not you be as proud of being the best ploughman as the best cricketer or the best shot? Nay, but you must listen to me, Maurice: whatever the purse-proud uncle or the fine cousins may say, I have good cause to believe that your trying for the prize would please one person besides myself—your own good landlord, Colonel Lisle."

Maurice's brow darkened. He drew up his person to his full stature, and spoke angrily and bitterly:—

"My own good landlord! Would you believe, Phœbe, that after living upon his estate, I and my fathers, these hundred years and more, paying his rent to a day, and doing as much justice to his land as if it were really our own, this good landlord of ours, the lease being upon the point of expiring, has sent us notice to quit!" He turned away in proud and angry sorrow.

"Notice! but has any one taken the farm?" inquired Phœbe.

"Not yet, I fancy; but he will find no difficulty in letting it. The lands lie close to my uncle's, and I have sometimes thought—at all events we have notice."

"But for what reason?"

"Oh! your rich landlord can easily find a reason for ridding himself of a poor tenant. The message was civil enough as regarded mother. If she had wished to remain in the farm, he would have had no objection; but, as her request was that the lease might be renewed in my favour, he could not comply. I was unfit for a farmer, he said; never in my business, always shooting, or coursing, or cricketing; never at home; never attending to the main chance; unthrifty in every thing; and about, he heard"—and then, suddenly, Maurice Elliott checked himself, and paused.

"About to marry a poor girl without a farthing, when you might have married your cousin Harriet with more money than I know how to reckon. Oh! Maurice! Maurice! little did I think when your own dear mother gave her consent, because I was active and industrious and an honest man's daughter, and because the son she loved so well loved me, little did I think that she would be turned from her home for that great goodness. But it must not be, dear Maurice! We must part! We must not marry, to have your mother turned out of doors; neither of us would be happy so. I can speak to my mistress—she is so very kind—and go to live with her friends a great way off. And you will give up coursing and shooting (you know you had promised me to do that,) and then, when Colonel Lisle finds that your heart *is* in your business, all will go right again, and you will stay at the Linden Farm, and we shall be happy."—And by way of earnest of this coming felicity, poor Phœbe burst into a violent fit of sobbing.

Maurice exhausted himself in protestations—to do him justice, most sincere—of love, everlasting love, to Phœbe, and hatred, equally durable and equally sincere, towards uncle, cousin, landlord, and, in short, all who sought to separate him from his beloved; assuring her that Colonel Lisle's whole estate would not bribe him to renounce his engagement; that, go where she might, he would follow: and that, so far from desiring to continue at their old home, nothing would induce him to remain the tenant of a landlord so unjust and despotic, one who had condemned, without hearing, the descendant of a race who had lived under his father and his father's fathers—ay, even from the planting of the great lime-trees which gave their name to the farm. But if Maurice was vehement, Phœbe, whose hysterical sobbing had ended in quiet and relieving tears, continued gently firm.

"You would not make me wretched, Maurice; I know that you would not; and how could I be otherwise if I were to cause your ruin? I shall go into Kent, to Mrs. Holden's sister, and Colonel Lisle will think better than to dismiss the son of his old tenant. Go to him, dear Maurice! Speak to him yourself! Explain—"

"Go to him, indeed! speak to him! Explain! I can tell you, Phœbe, that he must come to me if he wishes me to stay upon his land. There are other farms in the county beside his. We are no bond-slaves, blessed be God! in merry England. But don't you go, Phœbe! Stay and let me tell you of my plans; or, if you must go, promise at least to see me, and to give me a full hearing, before you leave Hilton. Promise me this. Stay at least till this ploughing-match is over. That will be a holiday far and near. See me then, and I will let this dear hand go."

And Phœbe, blushing, sighing, and protesting against a meeting which would only be a

renewal of pain, did, however, give the required promise; and the lovers parted—she for her in-door duties, he for the home he was so soon to relinquish.

They who witness those pretty rural festivals, with all their picturesque accessaries of tent and marquée, banners and bands, gay and happy crowds, shaded by noble trees and lighted by bright sunshine, and fanned by the sweet airs of the fairest of the seasons; or they who read the elaborate account of the day's proceedings in the county newspapers, where all is chronicled *en couleur de rose*, from the earliest procession to the latest cheer, little guess the trouble, and turmoil, and *tracasseries* which this apparently most amicable and peaceful celebration occasions in its district. The ostensible competitors, whose province it is to contend for the prizes, are for the most part, (the winners being satisfied, of course, and the losers soothed and comforted by encouraging speeches and a good dinner,—solid pudding added to empty praise,) as good-humoured and contented as heart can desire; their unlucky patrons and protectors, the Association, in its own proper person, having previously gone through as much fussing and disputing, squabling and quarrelling, as would carry a candidate through a county election, or produce a tragedy upon the boards of a theatre royal.

One committee-man threatened to resign because he was not a vice-president, and one vice-president did send in his resignation because he was not the president. One very great man (an Earl) applied to to assume that high office, never answered the secretary's letter; and another great man (a Viscount) coquetted, and poohed, and 'pshawed, and finally declined, because the Earl had been written to first. The committee had five meetings to consider of the place where they ought to meet; four to consider of the day of celebration; three of the hour of dinner; and the grand question of in doors or out of doors, marquée or barn, very nearly caused a dissolution of the society; party having run so high that two of the members, after scolding themselves hoarse, arrived at that state of dumb resentment which answers to the white heat of the anvil, and did not speak. They quarrelled about the value of the clothes, about the devices of the banners, about the colours of the cockades,—in short there was nothing which admitted of two opinions about which they did not quarrel; so that the chief dignitaries of the Association, the chairman, treasurer, and secretary, who had endeavoured to add to their several offices that of pacificators-general, declared that all the ploughmen and all their teams would not work half as hard on the day of trial as they had done during the time of preparation.

But this spirit of opposition, for opposition sake, is a little too much the fashion in our free country, where the good yeoman who subscribes his five shillings claims "a voice potential, as double as the duke's," who lays down his twenty pounds, (and that the facts are little exaggerated, will be readily admitted by most who have been behind the scenes in such societies,) so let me proudly say the ill-humour having once found a vent, works itself clear, and the rough burly disputants come round again, shake hands, and hear reason, with a readiness and facility just as characteristic of our national manners, where a squabble once over is over for ever, and a quarrel fairly reconciled only leaves the opponents faster friends than before. Accordingly, by the time the appointed day arrived, all was peace and amity, and joyous bustle, and the scene took its usual cordial and hearty character of a meeting calculated to advance the interests and promote the happiness of all classes.

Some weeks had elapsed since the dialogue between the lovers in Farmer Holden's barn-yard, and reports were rife in the village of a strange change in the fortunes of the young tenant of the Linden Farm. His father's will, it was said, threw him entirely into the power of his hard-hearted and purse-proud uncle, Stephen Elliott. There were different versions of the story, and no one spoke as of positive knowledge; but one fact seemed certain, that Maurice's negotiation for a farm of the same extent with that which he now occupied, had been cut short by the intervention of his stern relative, and that he was now seeking to rent a few acres of pasture-land attached to a cottage in the Moors. He and Phœbe had not again met, but, pursuant to her promise, she had not yet left Hilton, and was now dressing for the ploughing-match at her mother's cottage, with a feeling of light-heartedness for which she would have found it difficult to account. Was she—could she be conscious that her lover's gaze was fixed upon her through the open door? or was the knowledge that he was no longer the rich, and, to use the country phrase, the somewhat prodigal young farmer, but nearer her own level, brightening her eyes, and glowing in her cheek, with a hope that she had never put into words—a hope unacknowledged even to her own heart? or did she give more credit than she thought she did, to the report of her little cousin George, that he and his master were, after all, to try for the prizes at the ploughing-match? Phœbe knew that Stephen Elliott had said, with his scornful sneer and bitter tone, "Let him try for the suit of clothes—he may want 'em!" and Phœbe knew enough of her lover's temper to feel that this very taunt, uttered to keep him from the scene, was likely to take a different effect upon his high spirit. "At all events," thought she, "I shall see him!" and she dressed herself, in a flutter of spirits with which vanity had little to do, and then sat down quietly to await her father, whom she was to accompany, and to whom the first prize was

allotted, as having brought up a large family in credit and respectability, without receiving parochial assistance. The hale old man, in his well-preserved Sunday coat, with his grey hair smoothed down over his honest face, and his pretty daughter hanging upon his arm, as they walked to the ground after the match was over, formed one of the most interesting groups of the day.

The scene was really beautiful. Upon an extensive lawn, richly dotted with magnificent trees, and backed by a noble mansion embowered in woods, stood a splendid central marquée, with smaller tents on either side; flags and banners waved around the tents, and crowned the lofty decorated building, arched with lilacs and laburnums, where the gentlemen were to dine; and the large low open cart-house, overhung by a down-hanging elm, prepared for the ploughmen; carriages were driving up in close succession, horses prancing, music playing, and (to borrow the words of the County Chronicle) all the beauty and fashion of the neighbourhood were collected in front of the tents to witness the distribution of the prizes, and, best of all, they who had earned those prizes, the sturdy tillers of the soil, clean, healthy, and happy, their delighted wives and daughters, and the stout yeomen, their masters, triumphing in the success of their labourers. Add to this the lucky accident of a sunny day in the most genial of the seasons, and every advantage of light and shadow, and shifting clouds, and the result will be a scene too wide for the painter, but rich and bright, and joyous as ever inspired a poet in the merry month of May.

Phœbe looked only for one figure,—and there, dressed like the rest of the competitors, in a white smock-frock, his head decked with a double cockade, winner not only of the regular match, but of a subsequent prize for ploughing with two horses, stood Maurice Elliott, and close beside him, her little cousin George, sticking his hat, also doubly cockaded, as high as possible upon his head, and fairly standing on tiptoe, that his honours might be more conspicuous. Near him, so placed as to appear to belong rather to the gentry than to the wealthy yeomen, in which order he was really classed, leaned his uncle Stephen, his accustomed scornful sneer darkened as if by stronger passions.

The ceremony and its attendant speeches being over, Colonel Lisle approached Phœbe and her father, now also wearing the decorations of the day and joined by little George, and, patting the boy's cheek, he said graciously to the old man, "Why, you and your nephew are carrying off all our prizes."

"Add his son-in-law, if you please, sir," said Maurice Elliott, approaching the group, holding in one hand the hat decked with its blue cockades of success, and shaking hands heartily with the grey-headed and venerable old peasant; "Add his son-in-law, for such I shall be as soon as the bans can be published, for I have no money now to throw away upon a license. All is settled," continued he in a lower tone to the old man; "Phœbe consented as soon as ever I proved to her that not only my happiness but my prosperity depended upon my marrying such a wife as herself—pooh! as soon as I proved that my happiness depended upon marrying *her*, for there is not such another in the world; and Joseph Clarkson, finding that I am to have her to manage the dairy, has consented to let me rent his thirty acres down in the Moors, and the little homestead belonging to it. There 's a capital garden, and during my spare time, I shall raise vegetables for the Belford market, and mother 'll live with us, and you 'll see how happy we shall be!" And happiness danced in the young man's eyes, as again wringing the old labourer's hand, he turned away to join his Phœbe.

"Stop!" exclaimed Colonel Lisle, who, irresistibly attracted by the sudden alteration in his tenant's manner and conduct, had been unable to refrain from listening to the conversation. "Stop one moment, Maurice Elliott," said he, kindly; "and tell me what this means? Joseph Clarkson's land in the Moors! and your mother to live with you there! Why, in leaving the Linden, there will be the stock and the crops, and the farming utensils, enough, whether you retain or dispose of them, to set you up in one of the best farms in the country. All was left, I know, to you and your mother. Surely, you have not, since your father's death, involved yourself in such debt as to render this change of situation necessary?"

"I owe no man a farthing, sir," replied Maurice, with some pride of accent and manner; then catching the kindly glance of his landlord, he continued, mildly and respectfully, "Every thing was left to my mother and myself; but, either by accident or design—I believe—I am sure by accident,—the will is so worded, that although, in case of our continuing at the Linden farm, the stock and property of every sort was to remain for my use, upon paying a small annuity to my mother, yet, if we removed, it appears that the whole is to be sold; the money to be invested in the three per cents., and not to be touched either by her or me, until her death—neither of us receiving any benefit from this sum beyond the yearly payment of her annuity,—which heaven grant may continue for many years!"

"This is new to me, Maurice, and strange as well as new. Who is the executor?"

"Mr. Stephen Elliott, my uncle."

"Humph!—your uncle!—have you seen the will? Has any lawyer seen it? Your uncle, Mr. Stephen Elliott, is the executor, you say? Is the will in your father's handwriting?"

"No, sir; in that of Mr. Ball."

"The little pettifogging lawyer of Bewley—a man thirty miles off—Stephen Elliott's factotum; I thought so. Well, we must get some one learned in the law to look it over. Not to touch the money until after your mother's death! That could never have been the design of the testator, however well it might meet the views of—— This must be looked to, Maurice; send me a copy of the will."

"You are very good, sir," replied Maurice, firmly; "but with all gratitude for your kindness, I have made up my mind to let the matter rest. Firmly as I believe that my father did not contemplate this state of things—that he never dreamt of our leaving the Linden Farm, it is, nevertheless, so set down; and there is something in contesting the last will of a parent which I cannot endure. Besides, we shall do very well. My mother will have the comforts to which she has been accustomed, if my labour can provide them; and it will be better for me to be a working man. I was getting to like sporting better than farming. Phœbe said so, sir, as well as you. But now all that is out of the question. I can work, as I have proved to her; and, with her for a companion and a reward, I shall be a better and a happier man at the Moors than I should have been at our old house, well as I love it."

"Better and happier, perhaps, than you might have been, had this not occurred," replied Colonel Lisle, grasping his young tenant's hand with a pressure full of heart; "but not better or happier than you will be there now. The new lease shall be made out to-morrow. Your uncle, for views of his own, and in revenge for your refusal of his daughter, represented you to me as dissipated, idle, extravagant, and careless of all except the caprice of the hour. He even contrived to turn your love for Phœbe into a proof of the lowness of your mind and degradation of your habits. Under this view, I sent the notice, fully intending, however, especially after I found that he wanted the farm, to examine more closely into the facts. I ought to have looked into the matter at once; but I can hardly regret not having done so, since the experiment has not only made your character better known to me, but to yourself. And now you must introduce me to Phœbe! There she stands, looking at us;—no! now that she sees that we are looking at her, she turns away blushing. But that is Phœbe! I should know the fresh, innocent smile among a thousand."

And, as a lover of all justice—even that shadowy justice, called poetical, which is the branch over which we poor authors have most control—I must add, that whilst Phœbe's smiles grew sweeter and sweeter, as her blushes deepened, Stephen Elliott, the rich and purse-proud uncle, who had crept stealthily within hearing of the conversation, and felt himself detected and defeated, slunk away, hanging down his head, pale with impotent malice, and muttering ineffectual curses, the most contemned and miserable wretch of that large assembly.

THE GLEANER.

"They have all been touched, and found base metal."

"So! This is my return to my native village! This my reception from relatives who owe me so much!" Thus thought, rather than said, a poor-looking man, as he stood leaning over the gate of a newly-cleared wheat-field in the bright, bustling, busy, harvest time. "One," exclaimed he, as his musings took a tone of passion which broke unconsciously into words; "One—yonder portly landlady, forsooth, sitting in her bar, as she is pleased to call it—her bar, quotha! In my young days it was the little boarded parlour opening from the tap-room. A bar in the old Red Lion! What shall we hear of next? One, bedecked and bedizened, with her gown like a rainbow, her fringed apron, and her cap stuck out with flowers, sitting in her bar, if that be its style and title, amongst her glasses and punch-bowls, with a bell upon her table and a net of lemons dangling above her head; she, Miss Collins as she calls herself—she used to answer to the name of Jenny Collins, twenty years agone—refused point-blank to acknowledge me! denied to my face that she had ever seen me! called me a cheat and an impostor! wondered at my impudence in attempting to pass myself for her dear uncle, Michael Norris! threatened me with the stocks and the round-house, the justice and the jail! Precious minx! She whom I rescued from drudgery and starvation, from living half shop-woman, half-maid, with the stingy, termagant clear-starcher, in Belford Marsh! whom I set up in that very Red Lion!—perched upon her throne, the arm-chair, in the bar!—purchased the lease, the furniture, the good-will! paid her first year's rent! stocked her cellars! clapped a hundred pound bank-note into her hand! And now that I come home, old and lame, sick and ragged, she reviles me as a vagabond and an impostor, and tells me to be thankful to her compassion and tender-heartedness that she does not send for the constable to carry me to jail! Liar that she is! base, ungrateful, perjured liar! for she knew me. I say that she knew me; ay, as well as I knew her. She would be glad to be no more altered in the years that have changed her from a slim girl of twenty-five to a bloated woman of five-and-forty, than I, in those same years, with all my griefs!

"Then her brother—faugh! it maddens one to think of their baseness!—her brother, whom

I educated and apprenticed, finding him money afterwards to put him into partnership with old Jones, the thriving linen-draper. He, indeed, did not pretend to deny that I might be his uncle!—but, grant that I were, what claim had I upon his charity more than any other starving wretch? What was I to him? He pitied me, Heaven knew! but what could I expect from him? Oh, the smooth-speaking, soft-spoken knave! with his pity and his charity! Hypocrite in look and word! His tone was as gentle as if he had been bidding me welcome to bed and board for my whole life long. What a fawning parasite that would have been now, if I had accosted him like a rich man! Well! there is some virtue in these rags, since they teach false tongues to speak truth. Then came my cousin Anthony, whose daughter I portioned, whose runaway son I clothed and sent to sea. And this Anthony is now a great meal man—a rich miser who could buy up half the country. What said he? Why, he was poor himself—the scoundrel!—nobody knew how poor, and had been forced to make a rule to give nothing to beggars; ay, he called me a beggar! I might go to the Union, he said, that was the fittest place for me. To the Union! the workhouse! Oh, the precious rascal! The son of my father's brother, brought up in my father's house, —worth a hundred thousand pounds, and would have sent me to the workhouse—me, his only living kinsman! Oh, this world! this world! this world! Then—for I was resolved to try them all—I sought out my old school-fellow, Nicholas Hume, the spendthrift, whom I bailed in my young days, when little richer than himself, and saved from prison by paying his debts. What was his gratitude? Why, he, forsooth, had never heard my name. Michael Norris? Who was Michael Norris?—Oh, they knew me well enough twenty years ago, when I returned from the West Indies a rich man, husband of a wealthy creole, master of flourishing plantations, to visit my early haunts, help my poor relations—I found them all in distress some way or other—and shake hands with my old friends. Nobody had forgotten me then. But now that I come back a ragged cripple, houseless and friendless——" And the old man paused and lifted his wretched hat from his thin grey hairs, and passed his tattered handkerchief over his furrowed brow, with an air which proved that he was as much oppressed by mental suffering, by indignation, and disappointment, as by the sultry heat of an August noon.

"There are none left now," thought old Michael to himself, as, exhausted by his vehemence, he sank into a milder mood, "none left for me to apply to now, except the three orphan children of my poor nephew, William Leslie, the cousin of these hard-hearted Collinses, and their mother; and they, I fear, are themselves in great want and trouble. He, lately dead, after a series of undeserved misfortunes and a long and wasting illness; and she, working as hard as ever woman did work, to keep herself and her family out of the workhouse—that Union to whose comforts my precious cousin Anthony so tenderly consigns me. Poor things! They may well deny any knowledge of me! for they never saw me; and I have had a good sample of the slight impression that benefits conferred leave behind them! William was only eighteen when I left England and returned to Jamaica after my last visit. A fine, frank-hearted lad he was! I remember wishing to take him with me. But my poor sister would not part with him. She had married again after the death of her first husband, William's father, and a wretched match she made; for this second husband proved to be an habitual drunkard, always half-mad when intoxicated, who broke out at last into desperate frenzy, and, but for my interposition, would have murdered the poor boy. I seem to see the struggle now," thought the old man, closing his eyes; "he flinging himself upon William with a table-knife, and I rushing between them just soon enough to receive the blade in my arm. I bear the mark of the wound still. The madman was sent to an asylum, and there soon died. And my poor sister, well off for her station, could not part with this only son. He was a fine lad, was William, spirited and generous; and when she also died, he was already attached to the girl whom he afterwards married. I helped them too, for I loved the boy; I helped on that match, for it was one of sincere affection, and they were in the way to earn a handsome competence; there must have been some imprudence or great ill luck, to have reduced them to such poverty." So ran the train of the old cripple's reverie. "I never suspected it; he never wrote to me, and I engaged in my own affairs, and with children then of my own. Well, I will see them, however; they are in this field gleaning. So said their neighbour. Yes! This is the field! There they are. I'll see them," thought Michael Norris, "though it is probable that they too will know nothing of me." And, opening the gate, the old man limped slowly across the furrows, and began gathering the scattered ears of corn in his withered hand.

We have said *the field*, although, after passing the gate which admitted him between the two high hedges that bounded it on the northern side, the wide expanse from which the wheat had just been carried, assumed the appearance rather of a large open ridge of arable land, bordered by the high road, and terminated by a distant village, than of the small wooded enclosures so common in the midland counties. A pretty scene it was, as it lay before him, bathed in the sunshine, and a lovely group was that to which his attention was immediately directed. A pale young woman,

whose regular and beautiful features received additional interest from her close widow's cap, stood before him, holding a fine infant in her arms; a very pretty girl of twelve or thirteen was flourishing a tuft of wheat-ears before the baby's eyes, smiling herself at the smile she excited, while her little brother clung to the mother's petticoat in momentary fear of two high-fed dogs, attending a gentleman and lady riding slowly along the road.

The poor cripple drew back and sat down under a clump of maple and hawthorn, gay with the purple wild veitch, the white bindweed, and the pretty clematis, known by the still prettier name of "the traveller's joy;" whilst the riding party called off their dogs, spoke graciously to the child and his mother, and passed slowly out of sight. As they left her, Mrs. Leslie, for she it was, approached the old man, to replace her infant in his cradle, niched under the fragrant shade of some overhanging hazel-stems just beside his rude seat. Struck by the evidence of poverty, sickness, and sorrow afforded by his tattered apparel and his wrinkled yet venerable countenance, she took up a pitcher which stood by the cradle, and, with the kindness which the very poor so often show to each other, and a remark upon the heat of the day, offered him a small cupfull of the milk which formed the contents of the jug. He took it with a trembling hand, and thanked her with an emotion which our readers will comprehend, but which at once surprised and interested its object.

"Your name is Leslie?" asked he, as, after returning the cup with thanks and blessings, he made room for her beside him on the thymy bank.

"Your name is Leslie?"

"Margaret Leslie. It is so."

"The wife of William Leslie!'

"His widow. Ah, me! his widow!" replied she with a sigh. "The widowed mother of those children. Michael," added she, as the boy came near them, "take some milk yourself, and carry a cupful to your sister, and bring what wheat-ears she and you have gathered to my little heap."

"Michael!" echoed the old man, "your husband's name was William! How came you to call his son Michael? But the name belongs to your family perhaps;—your father, or some favourite brother?"

"No," replied the widow, "it was for a different reason. A very dear kinsman of my husband's bore that name, and in token of love and gratitude to him, and in fulfilment of an old promise, so our only son was christened."

"I remember,"—muttered the cripple to himself,—"I remember William said that his first boy should bear my name, and I think he wrote to that effect after the child was born; but the letter must have arrived at that time of misery." Then rousing himself, and turning to the gentle creature whom a feeling of unusual interest still detained at his side, he added aloud, "I do remember now, that William Leslie had an uncle called Michael Norris, but what peculiar cause of gratitude——"

"What cause!" interrupted Mrs. Leslie; "a thousand causes; from a mere infant, when I have heard my husband say that he gave him the first shilling he ever possessed,—that kind uncle, absent or present, was his good genius. He insisted upon his being sent to Belford school; paid himself for masters whom his guardians thought superfluous; rescued him from the frantic frenzy of his stepfather; saved his life at the most imminent peril of his own from the furious assaults of that wretched madman; placed him in the paper-mill, which, but for the rash speculations of his partner, would have been not merely a comfortable income for himself, but an affluent provision for his family; and, last and dearest kindness, when William, with his characteristic generosity, loved a poor girl, the portionless orphan of a naval officer, when interested connexions and officious friends all opposed the union, did not he, from across the wide ocean, send himself not merely his approbation of the destined marriage, but a portion for the destitute bride? I never saw him," continued Mrs. Leslie in a lower tone than that which had been dictated by her enthusiastic recollection of her benefactor's goodness; "but night and morning I have prayed for him, and night and morning do my poor children join in those prayers; and my dear husband amongst his latest words——"

"Did he too pray for the uncle who seemed to have forgotten him?" asked the old man, his voice half stifled with emotion. "Look, Margaret," added he, stripping up his sleeve, and showing a deep scar extending diagonally across his left arm; "this scar was received from the knife with which his furious and frantic stepfather was pursuing William Leslie. I am Michael Norris. You will not disdain to acknowledge the cripple who comes to your door hungry and ragged. Here too," said he, taking from his pocket a bundle of papers, "are characters that you well know."

Tearfully yet joyfully the warm-hearted and grateful Margaret returned the embraces of her venerable kinsman, presented her three children to him one by one, and replied to his questions as to their change of circumstances.

It needed few words to tell the story. Nothing is more rapid than a descent. The rolling of a stone down hill is a true type of falling fortune. Taking advantage of a long illness with which William Leslie was afflicted, his partner engaged in desperate speculations. They failed. The rash speculator absconded, and William remained, a bankrupt without friend or resource. Honest to the last, his wife resigned her small settlement to satisfy the creditors. His debts being paid, he had tried

every means of living, and whilst he retained his health had supported his family by the most persevering industry; but a fever, occasioned by over-exertion, had come on; his constitution, impaired by anxiety and labour, had been unable to resist the attack, and since that period the wife who had been the faithful partner of his cares and his toils had at least so far succeeded as to maintain her children without the assistance of charity, whether public or private.

"Why not have written to me when this bankruptcy took place?" inquired the uncle.

"Alas, dear sir! we had before heard of that terrible hurricane in which——"

"In which," said the old man, filling up with stern composure the sudden pause that from a mixture of delicacy and sympathy had arrested Margaret Leslie's words, "in which the plantation where I resided was laid waste, my house levelled with the ground, and my wife with four hopeful children, buried in the ruins! in striving to rescue them, this thigh—" striking the withered limb with a hazel-twig—"this thigh was broken. I owe my preservation to the gratitude of an emancipated negro; but for months, for years, all life, all nature was a blank before me! I have sometimes wondered how I could have survived such a blow!—for what purpose I was spared! The doubt was sinful, and finds its rebuke, its thrice-merciful rebuke, in this blissful hour. You heard then of my losses, dear Margaret? Poor William heard of them?"

"We were sure that something must have gone amiss, from receiving no reply to the letter which announced the birth of our boy, and claimed your promise of standing godfather at his christening. William did not like to write again upon such an occasion; it would have seemed like encroaching upon your too generous spirit. But when the news of that awful hurricane arrived, and Nicholas Hume and the Collinses made inquiries in London and ascertained that your plantation had indeed been amongst those laid waste,—then your silence was too well explained! I heard this sad news first; for it arrived during the dreadful illness which preceded my husband's bankruptcy. And when he regained so much breathing time after his own misfortunes as to ask news of you, no tidings could be obtained; all trace of you seemed lost. Oh that he had lived to see this day! His will be done! But oh that my poor husband had but lived to see once more the kinsman he loved so well!"

The old man pressed her hand in speechless emotion, and Margaret, smiling through her tears, went on:

"You must live with us, dear uncle, and we shall wait upon you and work for you, and be happy together—as happy as we can be without *him*—after all. My Annie is a good girl—oh such a good girl! and pretty, is she not, dear uncle? and poor Michael, your namesake, is a boy of a thousand. We have had much to be thankful for. Farmer Rogers, the overseer, whose books my husband kept (little Michael keeps them now, as well the farmer says as his father did,) supplies us with milk twice a-day. Mrs. Lascelles, the rector's wife, employs Anne and me constantly in needlework for her large family; and if we can but keep our pretty cottage—if we can but keep that cottage at whose porch poor William planted the honeysuckle and the China rose, and the vine which now half covers the thatch—that cottage where we worked and wept together, and where he died the death of the righteous—if we can but live together there, within sight of the turf that covers his dear remains, I should ask for nothing better on this side of the grave."

The widow's tears flowed afresh, and once again the old man pressed her hand.

"Is there any doubt of your retaining this beloved habitation, dear Margaret? And does my coming cause that doubt?"

"Oh no! no! dear uncle, not in the slightest degree. The cause of doubt is, that we have no lease, and that Miss Collins, as she calls herself, poor William's cousin, wants it for some purpose or other; people say with some view of marrying. But this is idle talk,—village gossip. What is certain is, that she wishes to take it, and is willing to give two pounds a-year more rent than I now give or can afford to give. If our landlord, Mr. Godfrey, had stayed, he and Lady Elizabeth had promised that I should remain; but the Hall, and the village, and the whole estate are sold, and the new lord of the manor is coming this evening. Hark! you may hear the bells ringing even now. Mr. Godfrey and Lady Elizabeth intend staying a few days at the rectory; you saw them ride by with their dogs; they have promised to speak in my favour to the new landlord; they mentioned it even now, and the good rector and his excellent lady will second my petition; still——"

"Be of good cheer, Margaret! Even if you should leave your pretty cottage, I would wager something——" The old man checked himself, and resumed in an indifferent tone, "Who is this new lord of the manor? What is his name?"

"The property was purchased by a Mr. Price; but he is understood to be an agent, and I have not heard the name of the real proprietor, who is said to be an elderly gentleman, and so rich that he will hardly be tempted to turn an old tenant from her cottage for so trifling an addition of rent. Nevertheless——"

"Once again, Margaret, be of good heart!" reiterated her uncle.

"The tenants are to meet him in the avenue; the farmers and their sons on horseback; the cottagers, women, and children, on foot. Ought I to join them? I have no shame in honest labour, but I do shrink from meeting the

scorn of those purse-proud kindred who——" and poor Margaret's tears fell fast. "Ought I to be there, dear uncle? I will go or stay as you direct?"

"Go, Margaret! Go, and fear nothing. Gather up your treasures; the jug, whose generous draught was the sweetest I ever quaffed; the wheat-ears; and the cradle with its crowing babe,—blessings on its dear face! Go boldly. I will not shame you by these unseemly rags; but will rest awhile under the friendly shade of the hazel, while you return home and prepare for the procession. Be sure that you fail not. We shall meet again soon, dear ones. For the present, farewell."

And something there was about the old man, ragged, sick, and lame as he was, that Margaret found it impossible to disobey. So, heartened up, she knew not why, (for many have felt, without being able to give the feeling its true name, the mingled power of sympathy and appreciation to comfort and to cheer,) she called about her her blooming children and departed; Annie and herself bearing the cradle between them, and the boy laden with the gleanings of the day.

The setting sun gleamed brightly between the noble elms that formed the beautiful avenue to Corston Hall, gilding the rugged branches and turning into pendent emeralds the leaves of the branches which, across the wide carriage-road, met and interleaved in a lengthened archway that might well have suggested the rich intricacies of a cathedral aisle in the proudest days of Gothic architecture. The village bells pealed amain, horses pranced, flags waved, the children of the parish schools strewed the gaudy flowers of early autumn; and as the carriage of the new lord of the manor rolled between the ivied lodges to the grey old Hall, a quaint irregular structure of Elizabeth's or James's days, with a tame peacock sunning himself on the stone balustrade, a large old English spaniel barking on the steps, and the tenants in their holiday apparel grouped around the porch, an artist, whether painter or poet, might have envied the accident which produced an arrangement so felicitously picturesque.

Something of this feeling, however unperceived or unguessed by herself, mingled with the natural emotions of curiosity and interest in our friend Margaret's bosom, as, standing humbly apart between her two elder children, with her infant in her arms, under a large sycamore, she gazed around upon the scene, and perceived, gaily adorned in the extreme of the country fashion, the rival candidate for her beloved cottage—the buxom landlady of the Red Lion, surrounded by the unfriendly kindred of her late husband. Neither Margaret nor her William had ever applied for assistance to these people, and yet she knew instinctively that some from pride and some from shame felt the silent reproach of her unassisted poverty and her blameless life—that all wished her absence, and would contribute as far as in them lay to turn her from her home; and in spite of the encouraging influence of her lately known kinsman's cheering forebodings, her heart sank within her as the door of the carriage was thrown open. An elderly gentleman, very neatly dressed, but pallid, emaciated, and lame, was assisted by his servants up the two low steps that led to the porch. Having ascended them with some difficulty, he turned round, took off his hat, bowed with a gracious smile to the assembly, and then paused, as if in search of some one whom he expected to see.

The effect of this apparition was a start of surprise and horror from the portly landlady, seldom equalled on the stage or off; her brother the haberdasher, who had just flourished his hat preparatory to leading the general cheer, let it fall in dismay, looking the curses which his habitual hypocrisy scarce repressed; cousin Anthony, the rich miserable miser, smothered a groan; and Nicholas Hume, in spite of his consummate impudence, fairly stole away.

What in the meanwhile did our friends in their humble nook under the sycamore? Little Michael danced for joy; Annie clapped her hands; and poor Margaret for the twentieth time during the last six hours, burst into tears—tears, this time, however, of unmingled joy.

"Mrs. Leslie! Margaret! my dear niece!" cried Michael, or as we may now call him, Mr. Norris, advancing to meet her; "to you alone of all my relations now living do I owe any account of my motives for coming amongst you as I have done to-day. With the rest of my kindred I have done for ever. But I also owe some explanation to my tenants and future neighbours. You all know that I left England about fifty years ago, a poor and friendless lad. I returned nearly thirty years afterwards, with riches honestly obtained, the happy husband of a wealthy and excellent woman, and the father of four hopeful children. I came to Corston; found my relations, some indigent, some comfortably situated; did what good I could amongst them, and went back to Jamaica, with the view at some future day of placing my sons at the head of my plantations in that island, and coming home to die in my native village. A hurricane passed over the estate where I lived, destroying my dwelling, my wife, my children, and almost myself. For many years I was dead to the world; but care had been taken of the large property that remained to me, and when, by God's mercy, I was restored to health, mental and bodily, I found myself rich indeed, so far as money was concerned—richer than ever; but in the blessed charities of life most poor—a childless, desolate, bereaved old man. I knew that a report had gone abroad that I was ruined by the hurricane, and resolved to prove the relations I had left in England, by coming amongst them

in seeming poverty. I have done so, and the experiment has answered well. And now, my dearest niece, I need not tell you that the cottage is yours; but for the second time to-day I throw myself upon your charity. You will not abandon me because I happen to be rich? You will never have the heart to do so. You will remember your promise that we should live together; and come with those dear children to brighten and gladden the old Hall."

THE VILLAGE AMANUENSIS.

"Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid."
POPE.

TAP! went a modest, timid, shy-sounding knock against the old-fashioned oaken door of William Marshall's domicil, in the brief twilight of a September evening—the hour of all others in which a pretty young woman might, with the least risk of observation, pay a visit to a handsome bachelor—the best hour to shield her from the attacks of village gossiping, or to cover her own confusion, should her errand be such as to challenge something like a jest on the part of her host.

Tap! tap! again went the slender forefinger; but although the reiterated summons was a thought louder than the first nearly inaudible demand for admittance, it was equally unsuccessful in arousing the attention of the master of the dwelling.

For this abstraction there was a reason which the young and tender-hearted will admit to be valid; the poor youth was in love, and to enhance that calamity he had quarrelled with the mistress of his affections.

William Marshall, at the time of which I write, schoolmaster of Aberleigh, the only son of one of the poorest widows in the parish, was a person of great merit. Some quickness and much industry had given him a degree of information and refinement unusual in his station, and his excellent conduct and character had secured the friends whom his talents had attracted. In short, he was one of those instances—more frequent than the grumblers of the world are willing to admit—which prove that even in this life desert is pretty certain to meet its reward.

The ancient pedagogue of the village, a man of some learning, who availed himself of the large and airy school-house to add boarders, who aspired to the accomplishments of mathematics and the classics, to the sturdy country lads, whom, by the will of the founder, he was bound to instruct in reading and writing, declared that this his darling scholar caught up, untaught and unflogged, all that he painfully endeavoured to instil, by book and birch, into the fortunate pupils whose fathers were rich enough to pay for teaching and whipping; and he followed up this declaration not only by installing him, at the early age of seventeen, into the post of his assistant, but by recommending him so warmly to the trustees as his successor, that at his death, which occurred about six years after, William Marshall, in spite of his youth, was unanimously elected to fill the place of his old master, and took possession of the pretty house upon School Green, with its two noble elms in front, as well as the large garden, orchard, and meadow, which the brook, after crossing the green, and being in turn crossed by the road and the old ivied bridge, went cranking round so merrily, clear, bright, and rapid as ever rolled rivulet.

Now this, besides its pleasantness as a residence, formed a position which, considering the difference of the age and times, might be reckoned, for our modest scholar, full as good as the magnificent proffer of the green gown, cows, grass, and four merks a-year, made by the good Abbot Boniface to Halbert Glendinning,* and by the said Halbert Glendinning, to the unspeakable astonishment and scandal of the assistants, unceremoniously rejected; since, in addition to the stipend paid regularly as quarter-day came round, and the prospect of as many boarders as the house would hold, was the probable contingency of the tax-gathering and rate-collecting, the timber-valuing and land-measuring, which usually falls to the share of the schoolmaster, together with the reversion of the office of parish-clerk, provided always, that for a "master of scholars,"† who taught Latin and Greek and took boarders, such offices were not held *infra dig.*

William Marshall's humble wishes were gratified. He was a happy man; for, in addition to the comfort of having a respectable home for the infirm mother to whom he had always been a most exemplary son, he had the gratification (so at least said the gossips of Aberleigh) of preparing a suitable abode for one of the best and prettiest of our village maidens.

Ever since the days of Pyramus and Thisbe proximity has been known for the friend of love; and such was probably the case in the present instance, since Lucy Wilmot, the object of William Marshall's passion, was his next neighbour, the brook of which we have made honourable mention being the sole barrier by which her father's meadows were divided from the garden and orchard of the school.

A more beautiful boundary was never seen than that clear babbling stream, which went wandering in and out, at "its own sweet will," with such infinite variety of margin; now fringed with alders, now tufted with hawthorn

* Vide "The Monastery."

† "A scholar, sir! I was a master of scholars."—*Lingo, in the Agreeable Surprise.*

and hazel, now rising into a steep bank crowned by a giant oak flinging its broad arms across the waters, the reflection of its rich indented foliage broken by the frequent dropping of a smooth acorn from its dimpled cup; now sloping gently down into a verdant bay enamelled with flowers of all hues, the intensely blue forget-me-not half hidden under the light yellow clusters of the cross-leaved bedstraw, while the purple spikes of the willow-herb waved amidst the golden chalices of the loose-strife, and large patches of the feathery meadow-sweet, the heliotrope of the fields, spread its almond-like fragrance and its pale and feathery beauty to the very centre of the stream, overhanging the snowy blossoms of the water-lily as they rose from their deep-green leaves, and mingling with the most remarkable of the many sedges that border our English streams, whose flowers placed so regularly on either side of their tall stalks, resemble balls of ebony thickly set with ivory spikes. Certainly, of all possible methods of dividing or uniting persons and property, this bright and cheerful stream seemed the most propitious to social intercourse, as William and Lucy found by experience.

The green in front of the school-house formed a commodious natural play-ground for the children, sufficiently near for safety, and yet wide enough for all their sports, the noble game of cricket included; so that those sharp little eyes which love so dearly to pry into the weaknesses of their elders, especially when those elders assume the double relation of example and preceptor, were, during the intervals of tuition, happily engaged elsewhere; and really nobody, except perhaps a lover, would believe how attentive William Marshall became to the cow which was tethered in the orchard, how punctual in culling himself all the fruit and vegetables needed from the garden, how assiduous, above all, in watering his mother's little flower-plot sloping down to the stream; whilst on her part it was at least equally remarkable how often Lucy Wilmot found cause to fill her pail at the brook, or to feed the ducks, geese, chickens, and turkeys, which she had dislodged from their old home, the farm-yard, to establish by the water-side. Never were poultry so zealously looked after. It happened to be a dry summer; and it stands upon record at the Brook Farm that Lucy volunteered to fetch all the water wanted for domestic use by the whole family. "To be sure," as her sisters would laughingly observe, "they had sometimes to wait for it, especially if it were towards dinner time, or before breakfast, or after school broke up." And then Lucy would blush, and declare that she would never go near the place again; and then, by way of keeping her word, she would take up her little basket of barley, and run across the meadow to feed her chickens.

Halcyon days were these. What a charming spot for a rural flirtation was that mirror-like stream! What tender words floated across it! What smiles and blushes looked brightly down into the bright waters! And of how many of the small gifts, the graceful homages in which love delights, was that clear brook the witness! From the earliest violet to the latest rose, from the first blushing cherry to the Katherine pear, rich and ruddy as Lucy's own round healthful cheek, not an offering escaped the assiduity of the devoted lover. Halcyon days were these to our friend William, when an affliction befel him in the very scene of his happiness—a shadow fell across the sunshine of his love, so hideous and gloomy as to darken his whole future prospects, to sadden and embitter his very life. Like many other swift and sudden poisons, nothing could be more innocent in appearance than this implement of mischief, which wore the quiet and unoffending form of an unopened letter.

Hovering one day by the side of the stream, waiting with a basket of filberts, "brown as the squirrel whose teeth crack them," as Fletcher has it—filberts firm, juicy, and fragrant, the first of the season—waiting until the close of evening should bring his Lucy to tend the poultry under the great oak—he saw a letter on the grass, and springing from bank to bank on a spot a little higher up, where the brook was sufficiently narrow to admit of this sort of lover's leap, he stooped for the paper, suspecting, sooth to say, that it might be some billet-doux of his own, with the design of returning it to the fair owner. His it was not. On the contrary, the epistle was sealed with a pretty device of doves drinking from the same shallow bowl—an imitation of the exquisite doves of the Vatican—which he himself had given to Lucy, his first pledge of love, and directed in her well-known hand to

Mr. Willatts,
at the Red Boot,
Bristol Street,
Belford.

Well did William Marshall know this Mr. Willats! Well did he know and heartily did he despise this dandy of the Red Boot, who—slim, civil, and simpering, all rings and chains, smirks and grimaces, curls and essences—skipped about in his second-hand coxcombry, as if the vending of earthly boots and shoes were too gross for so ethereal a personage, and glass-slipper maker to Cinderella were his fitting designation! William always had disliked him, in virtue of the strong antipathy which opposite holds to opposite; and now to see a letter to him directed by Lucy,—his Lucy,—sealed too with that seal! "But she would explain it! of course she would! she must, she should explain what motive she could have for writing to such a creature as that, after confessing her love for him, after all had been arranged between her father and him-

self, and everything was prepared for their marriage before the ensuing Christmas. He had a right to demand an explanation, and ought not to be content with anything short of the most ample and satisfactory account of the whole matter."

Just as he had worked himself up to the very climax of angry suspicion, his fair mistress, with her eyes cast down upon the grass, evidently in search of the lost letter, advanced slowly towards the spot. She started when she saw him, and when he presented the epistle, with a greeting in the true spirit of the above soliloquy, in which a stern and peremptory demand for explanation was mingled with an ironical and contemptuous congratulation upon the correspondent whom she had chosen, her answer, between confusion at the discovery, indignation at the jealousy so openly avowed, and astonishment at the high tone taken by one who had hitherto shown nothing but the gentlest tenderness, displayed so much displeasure, vexation, and embarrassment, that the dialogue grew rapidly into a quarrel, and ended in a formal separation between the lovers. Each party returned home angry and grieved. William most angry, if we may judge from his sending the unlucky filberts, basket and all, floating down the stream; Lucy most grieved, if the crumpled letter and defaced address, so nearly washed out by her tears that it required all the skill and experience of the Belford postmaster to decipher the legend, may be accepted as evidence.

In spite, however, of this token of her fond relenting, the first tidings that William Marshall heard of Lucy were that she had gone on a visit to her god-mother twenty miles off. William, on his part, staid at home instructing his pupils as well as he could. In spite of lovers' quarrels the work of the world goes on. To be sure the poor boys wondered why their master, usually so even-tempered, was so difficult to satisfy; and his fond mother could not comprehend why, when she spoke to him, her son, always so mindful of his only remaining parent, answered at cross purposes. But William, although a lover, was a strong-minded man; and before a week had elapsed he had discovered his own infirmity, and had determined to correct it. Accordingly he opened his desk, took out the map of an estate which he had just finished measuring before the unlucky adventure of the hero of the Red Boot, and having compared his own mensuration of the different fields with the estimated extent, and completed the necessary calculations, had just relapsed into a reverie when the interruption occurred which formed the commencement of our little story.

Tap! tap! tap! sounded once again, and this time a little impatiently. Tap! tap! tap!

"Ah, my good cousin Kate!" said William, at last admitting the poor damsel, who had waited this unmerciful while at the door, of which detention our lover had, one hardly knows how, a glimmering consciousness; "I hope you have not been long detained! Why did not you knock louder? Do you want my mother? No; or you would not have come to the door of my little room. You want me, Kate, I see. So tell me at once what I can do for you."

And smiling, blushing, hesitating, Kate confessed "that she did want her cousin William; that she had a letter—" (William started and winced at the very sound) "a letter to write; and she was such a poor scholar, and the friend who used to write her letters was away; so she had come to trouble cousin William."

"No trouble at all, dear Kate!" replied William, recovering from his confusion, and too much occupied with the recollections awakened by the very name of a letter to observe the embarrassment of his pretty visiter; "no trouble at all. Here is my paper ready. Now begin. Is it to your brother in London?"

"Oh no!" replied the blushing damsel; "not to my brother; to——a friend."

"Very well!" said William. "The days draw in so fast that it will soon be dark. Begin, dear Kate!"

And after a little hesitation, and playing with a folded letter that she held in her hand, Kate, in a very low, hesitating voice, began to dictate: "Dear Francis—"

"Dear Frances," echoed her amanuensis, unsuspectingly, in a still lower tone; then pausing, and looking up as expecting her to proceed.

"Stop!" said Kate; "only that it is wrong to give you the trouble to begin again — but that sounds so formal!"

"I think it does," replied William, dashing his pen rapidly through the words; "and the abbreviation is so pretty too. There," continued he; "Dear Fanny! that sounds as well again!"

"Fanny!" exclaimed Kate, half laughing in the midst of her blushes. "Fanny, indeed! Why cousin William!"

And cousin William, awaking immediately to the perception of the true state of the case, dashed out the second beginning as rapidly as he had done the first, and laughing with a very good grace at his own stupidity, wrote this time in full assurance of being right,—

"Dear Frank!"

"Fanny, forsooth!" repeated Kate, still laughing.

"Well, but Kate, remember that I had never heard of this friend of yours. To be sure, it was very, very stupid. But now shall we go on with the letter? or may I ask who this Frank——"

"Fanny," interposed Kate, archly.

"Well! who this Francis is? Does my good aunt know, dear Kate? or——"

"Oh yes, dear William! mother knows, and father knows, and both like him so much! It

has been kept a secret till now, because his friends are so much better to do in the world than mine; for he is a tradesman, William, going into partnership with his late master; they are so much richer and grander than father, that we thought they might not like their eldest son to marry a poor working-girl. But he said they would only look to good character, and so they say in this letter, and they have consented; and he told them, how you, my own cousin, had got on by your good conduct, William, and how proud he was of knowing you——"

"I know him, then!" interrupted William, with pleased curiosity.

"Yes, to be sure! Don't you remember our all drinking tea together at Farmer Willatt's last Sunday was three weeks? Lucy knew it all along."

"Frank! Frank Willatts?" inquired William eagerly. "Was it for you, then, that Lucy wrote that letter?"

"To be sure she did. And were you jealous of her, William? And was that why she went away? Oh, William! William! to be jealous of dear, good Lucy, because she kept my secret! Oh! cousin William!"

But William was too happy to be very penitent, and Kate was too pleased and too busy to dilate upon his offences. She had her letter to dictate, and, with a little help from her willing amanuensis, a very pretty letter it was; and so completely in charity with all the world, especially with the Franks of the world, was this amanuensis, that, before he had finished Kate's epistle, he had written himself into such feelings of good-will towards her correspondent as to add a most friendly and cousinly postscript on his own account.

What were the contents of the far more ardent and eloquent letter which William Marshall afterwards wrote, and whether he did or did not obtain his mistress's pardon for his jealousy, and its fruits, we leave to the imagination of our fair readers. We, for our part, knowing the clemency of the sex, incline to think that he did.

HOP GATHERING.

I do not know whether in the list of organs which figure upon the skull-maps in the system of Doctors Gall and Spurzheim, there be any which being translated (for of a verity the language of phrenology needs translation) would indicate a fondness for animals. Most assuredly, if no such propensity be therein marked, it is an important omission, and should be supplied forthwith; for that such an indication does exist most strongly in numberless individuals of both sexes, and is often developed under the most extraordinary disadvantages, is as certain and far more frequent than the powers of music and painting, in language, and in calculation, the Mozarts, the Correggios, the admirable Crichtons, and American boys, those wonders of learning, of science, and of art, whose lives crowd our biographical dictionaries, and whose heads (as handed down in books and portraits) form the triumph of the phrenologist. Separate from the fondness for animals generally, and more distinctive and engrossing perhaps than any other species of that very engrossing propensity, is the passion for birds. Boys are liable to it as a class; and so they say is that particular order of single women ungallantly termed old maids. It prevails a good deal in certain callings, chiefly among sedentary artisans, such as tailors, shoemakers, and hair-dressers in provincial towns. A barber in Belford Regis is amongst the most eminent fanciers of the profession, and wins all the prizes at canary-shows for twenty miles round. Also the taste is apt to run in families, descending from father to son through many generations. Ours, for instance, happens to be so distinguished. My grandfather had an extensive aviary, and was a celebrated breeder of the whole tribe of songbirds; and his brother, my grand-uncle, is even now remembered as the first importer of the nightingale into Northumberland. He had two in cages which he kept for several years, to the unspeakable delight of the neighbourhood, who used to crowd round his hospitable door to listen to their matchless note—one of the few celebrated things in the world which thoroughly deserves its reputation. My dear father is no degenerate descendant of his bird-loving progenitors. It was but the other night that he was telling me under what circumstances he first went to the play. When a little boy at a preparatory school at Hexham, a strolling company visited the town, and being about to get up 'The Padlock,' recommended, I suppose, by the fewness of the characters, and in great distress for a bullfinch, a property essential to Leonora's song,—

> "Say, little, foolish, fluttering thing,
> Whither, ah! whither would you wing
> Your airy flight!"

the manager, having heard that he possessed a tame bullfinch, came to him to request the loan, which he granted with characteristic good-humour, and received in return from the grateful manager a free admittance for the season. Fancy the pride and delight of the boy in seeing his favourite figuring upon the stage, and hearing the applause of the audience as he perched upon the prima donna's finger! This must have been considerably above seventy years ago; and (for in this respect as well as in his general kindness, 'the boy was father to the man,') the fancy has remained ever since in full force and constant exercise. There is

scarcely any sort of bird that comes within the compass of moderate means which he has not possessed at one period or another. Once during the twenty years that we lived in a large country-house, with its spacious lawn, its extensive paddock, and noble piece of water, he assembled a great quantity of domestic game, if such a phrase be admissible; pretty speckled partridges — too pretty to be eaten; pheasants of all varieties, from the splendid English bird to its eastern rivals, the golden and the silver; and a large assortment of water-fowl, from the queenly swan down to the trim little Dutch teal. King Charles himself never had a more extensive collection, or took greater delight in tending and cherishing his feathered subjects. But these half-civilized savages proved attractive to two orders of miscreants,—poachers pursued them by day, and thieves by night; and, dead or alive, shot or stolen, the domesticated partridges and tame wild ducks gradually disappeared. To them succeeded all manner of curious poultry—peacocks, pied and white; together with that commoner but most gorgeous kind, who flaunts his starry train over the grass, and whose graceful vanity so becomes his stately beauty, adorned our farm-yard, accompanied by Muscovy ducks, Poland fowls, Friezland hares, crested bantams, and so forth. Then followed pigeons of all denominations—fantails, pouters, carriers, nuns, and dragons crowded our dovecote. But somehow or other our ill-luck continued. The poultry had a trick of dying, and the pigeons flew away; so that my father resolved to confine himself to the aviary, and took to breeding canaries, and had the honour of carrying away the prize for three birds of the three orthodox kinds, jonque, pied, and mealy, from nearly two hundred competitors. Long, too long would it be to tell of all the smaller songsters, the larks, linnets, thrushes, and blackbirds, the bullfinches, goldfinches, and 'all the finches of the grove,' as well as of the owls, hawks, crows, and ravens, the birds of day and the birds of night, which have at different times occupied his attention. Suffice it to say, that in the month of August last our feathered family consisted of two nightingales, one of which had been in our possession for sixteen months, singing all day (for in a cage the nightingale only sings during daylight) with matchless strength and power, from the first of October to the last of June; a piping bullfinch, a linnet, two starlings, and the magpie whose adventures and accomplishments form the subject of this true history. Amongst our infinite variety of feathered bipeds, the class which in default of a better name I shall take leave to denominate talking-birds, had been upon the whole the most distinguished. Even I, who, partly on account of the tragical termination of many of our pets, partly because I so dearly love freedom and the greenwood, that all the hemp-seed and groundsel in the world would never, I am very sure, reconcile me to a cage, do not so heartily sympathize in this taste of my dear father's as I do in most of his other pursuits — even I, albeit no bird-fancier, could not help being occasionally diverted by the saucy, chattering jays, starlings, and jackdaws, which it was the especial delight of that saucy, chattering, diverting personage, Master Ben, our factotum, (groom, gardener, page, and jester,) to bring about the place. Pre-eminent over all other talking-birds, and unrivalled since the days of Vert-vert, was the magpie in question. He, for a wonder, was not of Ben's importing. Whence he came nobody knew, although the old molecatcher, who was also the parish sexton, and whom he followed for a whole hour in the twilight as he was setting his traps to catch an underground enemy that infested my pansy-beds, alternately shouting to him by his name of Peter Tomkins in one ear, and imitating the tolling of a bell in the other, insinuated to me, with a look of great horror, that 'the fewer questions were asked upon that subject the better; the creature was certainly no better than he should be. Nobody could tell for whom that bell would toll next.' And off shuffled poor Peter, fancying himself a doomed man. For certain, Mag's first appearance had been somewhat in character with the good sexton's suspicions. He had hopped down the walk and stopped opposite the glass-door of our garden-room, where we were sitting with several friends, and one amongst them happened to inquire the hour. 'What 's o'clock?' reiterated Mag, in a soft, slow, distinct voice; 'Half-past four.' And upon consulting watches, and that very true time-teller, the sun, as he threw his beams upon the old dial, half-past four it was; and everybody stared at the bird as he stood upon one leg, with his head a little on one side, looking very knowing and exceedingly ragged and dirty, as your tame magpie is apt to do. Everybody stared at the bird, and laughed, and said that it was a strange coincidence, as everybody does say upon such occasions.

Mag's further proceedings were in keeping with this oracular entrée. A saucy bird he was, and a mischievous; singing, whistling, sneezing, coughing, blowing his nose, laughing, crying, knocking at doors, ringing of bells, thieving, and hiding with singular dexterity. He caught up and repeated with remarkable facility all that was said, and really seemed as if he understood its purport. For instance, I one day said to him, 'Mag, if you bite my finger, I will never give you any more fruit or sugar.' And although I regularly did feed him every day with sugar and fruit, mine were the only fingers in the house that remained unbitten. He certainly, too, could apply names to their right owners. One of his great delights was to summon all the servants about him; sometimes in his own soft, distinct tone; some-

times by imitating, with a wonderful clearness, my voice or his master's. 'Ben! John! Martha! Lucy! Marianne!' And when he had got them all around him, 'Go,' he would say, 'Go to ——;' and when everybody was expecting something as naughty as Vert-vert would have said, after his voyage in the coche d'eau had contaminated his manners, he would suddenly break into a laugh, and finish his sentence with 'Go to Jerusalem! Go to Jerusalem!' He never failed to call over this beadroll of names at least once a day, and if the wrong person answered, Lucy for Marianne, or Martha for Lucy, he would stamp his little foot, and scold, and storm, and refuse to be pacified until the offender begged pardon and asked him to begin his catalogue again. Sometimes he added the dogs to the list, and the greyhounds—a simple, credulous, innocent race—readily answered to his call. Once, and but once, he took in Flush, a beautiful little brown cocking spaniel, a greater pet even than himself, and infinitely more sagacious. 'Flush!' said Mag, with an imitation of my voice that was even startling; and Flush, who was looking forward to our evening walk, threw down his bone and ran to answer the summons. 'Flush!' repeated Mag, in the same tone, with a nod and a laugh! In my life I never saw such a mixture of shame and anger as my beautiful pet's large bright eyes exhibited. Mag tried the trick again. But it failed. The perfect good faith of the gentle and faithful little creature, who, never deceiving, could not suspect deceit, had enabled the knavish bird to cheat him *once*; but the imposition once detected, became, so far as Flush was concerned, altogether powerless.

Nevertheless, there was no resisting a certain degree of liking for the poor bird, whose stock of drollery—for every day he came out with something fresh—really seemed inexhaustible. He had a cage, to which, being generally fed there, he frequently retired of his own free-will. One day, however, he was missing; that tongue of his was a thing to be missed, just as the near neighbours of a mill or a church-steeple would soon feel the absence of the clapper and the chimes. He had left the premises more than once before, and had led Ben and John a dance amongst all the trees and cottages of Aberleigh—appearing and disappearing—now on the ground and now on the house-top, and playing at bo-peep among the roofs and chimneys in a manner more provoking than words can tell; so that Ben, after fairly lodging his new straw hat on the branches of a pear-tree from the topmost bough of which Mag, swinging much at his ease, had thought fit to hail him with his usual 'How d'ye do, Master Ben?' had fairly given up the chase in despair. Once, twice, thrice, had Mag eloped; but then the tricksy spirit had never failed to make itself audible; and even when, upon one occasion, he had absented himself for one entire night, he had taken care to re-appear in the morning at Ben's bedroom window with his usual tap, tap, tap, against the glass, and the grave business-like summons,—'Past six o'clock, Ben! Time to get up!'—wherewith he was wont, as regularly as the clock struck, to awaken that trusty domestic. Only the Tuesday before, Mag had been absent for a longer period than common; but, directed by a singular noise of fierce and angry jabbering, something like the scolding of women in a passion, he had been discovered in a field at the bottom of the garden, engaged in a furious disputation with two wild birds of his own species, earnestly defending a bare and dirty bone, his own property doubtless, from the incursions of these intruders. That Mag had fought with other weapons than his tongue, and been worsted—that he was very glad when our approach frightened away his opponents—was quite plain; but they being gone, he gladly followed us home in the opposite direction, and had, up to this unfortunate Friday, (for it was upon this day of ill-luck that we missed our poor bird,) conducted himself with a degree of prudence and discretion that showed him to have taken warning by his contest and discomfiture. On that Friday, however, he was missing from noon to night; the next morning dawned—six o'clock struck—but no magpie tapped at the window to call Ben; he was neither in the house nor the garden, on the trees or the chimneys. That the poor bird was lost seemed indisputable; and so strong was the general impression of his attachment to us, and of his sagacity, that we were pretty generally convinced that he must have been stolen. Who might be the thief was not so easy to determine. Aberleigh is situated upon a well-frequented road leading from one great town to another, and our cottage stands in the centre of the village street. Moreover, holding a sort of middle station between the gentry, to whom we belong by birth, and habits, and old associations, and the country people, almost our equals in fortune, who all resort to my dear father for advice and assistance in their little difficulties, there is scarcely a person within ten miles who does not occasionally pay a visit to our habitation. Then Ben's acquaintance! gardeners, gamekeepers, cricketers, grooms! Ben knows the whole county! And although it would be rather too affronting to suspect one's friends and acquaintances of thievery, yet they amongst whom the magpie was deservedly popular, had of course contributed to diffuse his reputation.

On that unlucky Friday, too, we had had even more visiters than common. Two or three sets of people had come from London by railway; five or six neighbouring families had called; the coursing-season was coming on, and two or three brace of greyhounds had been brought by their respective owners to be compared with our dogs; a flower-show was ap-

proaching, and half-a-dozen gardeners had been backward and forward amongst zinnias and dahlias; a cricket-match was pending, and the greater part of the two elevens had come to arrange the day and the hour; one constable had arrived for orders to send off an encampment of gipsies, who had established themselves in Woodcock-lane, and another had come for a warrant to take up a party of vagrants caught in the fact of poaching and suspected of sheep-stealing at Hinton-Down. Who was the thief was still a mystery! But when day after day had passed over, and no tidings arrived of our bird, that he was stolen became the firm conviction of our whole family. Sorry, however, as we were for the merrry, saucy little creature, whose spirit of enjoyment and activity of intellect seemed so disproportioned to his diminutive form and low rank in the scale of living beings, still the recollection began to wear away; and when, at the expiration of a week, we sallied forth to partake of a déjeûner in the beautiful grounds of Aberleigh Great House, our domestic calamity was, to say the truth, pretty nearly forgotten. Never was a more delightful little party than assembled by the side of the clear brimming Loddon on a glorious afternoon, near the end of August. The day was so sultry that the tables were laid under some magnificent elms upon the lawn, forming, with its adjuncts of picturesque architecture, of exquisite scenery, of lovely young women and thrice lovely children, a picture of gay and courtly elegance worthy of Watteau. The déjeûner, however, sumptuous and luxurious as it was, formed by no means the chief attraction of the day. Under the long, lofty terrace, crowned with old firs and lime trees, which forms the boundary of Aberleigh Park, the Loddon, spreading for nearly a mile into an almost lake-like expanse, rivals the Thames in consequence, whilst it far surpasses it in beauty; and then, narrowing as it is spanned by the low arches of the bridge, glides along amongst quiet water-meadows with a pastoral seclusion and tranquillity which would have enchanted Izaak Walton. A row up this bright river was the express intention of the party; and accordingly, the grand question of oars or sculls being decided, water bailed out, rowlocks and thowls examined, we set forth in three as pretty skiffs as may be seen between Battersea and Putney Bridge; ourselves as merry and happy a set of people as are often assembled in this work-a-day world.

Some were sailors — one especially, most worthy of that honoured name, which is the synonyme of all that is frank, and kind, and true-hearted in man; and one who, by some mistake in destiny, is not really a sailor, but who possesses all the attributes and almost the skill—some were sailors, some were soldiers, some gentlemen at large; but the charm of the party was felt to be the freight of one of the boats, consisting of four lovely young women, singing like nightingales, and, as it seemed, from the same impulse of a full and joyous heart, who went backward and forward upon the water, spreading abroad melody, as the sun diffuses light, or the roses their perfume. That craft was naturally looked to as the one from which we should derive most pleasure, but we hardly, on embarking, anticipated the kind of amusement which it was destined to afford. It so happened, that one of their rowers was accidentally detained, and another compelled to take the management of the boat containing the children, so that our pretty songstresses fell to the charge of one solitary boatman, who, taking care that no real harm should befall them, seemed to find some diversion in plunging them and himself into small difficulties; and, the rudder being unshipped, they, so to say, staggered about upon the water as if the boat were tipsy; now running aground upon an island, now taking a snag, (to borrow a phrase current upon the Mississippi;) now caught (by veil and bonnet) in the bushes upon one bank, now entangled in the sedges upon the other, until the sirens of the Loddon, half-frightened and half-amused, mixed screams and squalls with the sweet strains of the Canadian boat-song, and shrieks of laughter with 'A boat, a boat unto the ferry.'

After shooting the bridge, matters grew worse. They had sailed from harbour so long before our boat, that we had hitherto only looked and laughed at the strange tacks, voluntary and involuntary, which their skiff had taken. But now, gallantly manned and ably steered, we shot ahead of them, drowning 'O Pescator dell' onde' by such a torrent of river wit as shall not be exceeded from Gravesend to Kew. At last, when, amid laughing and singing, and quiet enjoyment, the mists were rising in the meadows, and the moon looking down into that bright mirror, the still smooth stream, we took our fair damsels in tow, and prepared to return homeward. Looking up as we were about to shoot the centre arch of the bridge, I saw a strange vagabondizing gipsy sort of light cart, that looked as if it had never paid any duty, passing above it; and while our mermaids were singing, with a delightful unity of their young voices,

> "Oft in the stilly night,
> Ere slumber's charm has——"

'bound me,' they would have added, but that charm was broken by a well-known voice from above, which pronounced with startling distinctness, 'Go, go, go to Jerusalem!' Was it my magpie, or was it his wraith? Of course, by night, a good mile from our landing-place, and then a mile back again to the bridge, all search or inquiry was hopeless. I told the story when I got home, and found the whole village divided in opinion. Some thought with

me that the gipsies had hold of him; some with my father that he had been stolen by the more regular thieves; some thought that it was a trick; some that it was a mistake; and some held with Peter Tompkins that the magpie was no magpie after all, but an incarnation of the Evil One in black and white plumage. Again was poor Mag forgotten, as, one bright September morning, we set forth towards Farnham, a pretty old-fashioned town, overlooked by the bishop's palace, with its stately trees and extensive park, and famous for its hop-gardens, and for Mr. Garth's geraniums, where in one small greenhouse he rivals in splendour, although not in extent, Mr. Foster's exquisite collection, and equals him in hospitality and kindness. It is something remarkable, I think, something pleasant as well as remarkable, and peculiar to our age and country, that two English gentlemen should surpass, by the mere effect of taste and skill, the efforts of the working gardeners, whose livelihood depends upon their flowers, with the strong stimulus of the desire of gain on the one hand, and the enormous resources of wealth as lavished in the green-houses of our great noblemen on the other. To raise a magnificent geranium is to increase and multiply beauty, and to strengthen and diffuse the feeling of the beautiful in this work-a-day world. Art herself does little more. The road from Aberleigh to Farnham passes through very pretty and very interesting scenery. We leave Strathfieldsaye and Silchester, emblems of the present and the past, to the right; and Sir John Cope's magnificent old mansion of Bramshill, and the parsonage at Heckfield, where Mrs. Trollope passed her early days, to the left. Then we pass through a succession of wild woodland country, to the little town of Odiham; plunging again into forest-like glades, until we cross a high, barren, heathy ridge called the Hog's Back, the view from the top of which forms a superb and extensive panorama. Descending this long, steep, and lofty hill, we find ourselves once more amidst cultivation; quaint old-fashioned villages, sunk deep in the valley, and patches of hop-gardens intersecting the fields. The hop-gatherers were busy in taking down and stripping the long poles, the English vintage; and the vines hung like garlands in rich wreaths of leaves and flowers intertwined one with another, and diffusing around the bitter racy aroma of the fragrant plant, dear to the lovers of mighty ale. A pretty scene it was and a stirring. We stopped the carriage at the gate, to view it more closely, and listen to the gay jests and merriment of the many groups collected on the ground. There is something contagious in real, hearty mirth, and Ben, our driver, without knowing why, joined in the laugh. Apparently his peculiar laughter was recognised; for in a moment we heard from the other side of the gate, 'Ben! how d'ye do, Ben? Glad to see you, Master Ben! Go to Jerusalem!' in Mag's most triumphant tones; and this time we did not hear in vain. We recovered our bird; and here he is at this moment, happiest, sauciest and most sagacious of magpies.

END OF PROSE WORKS.

MISS MITFORD'S POETICAL WORKS.

FOSCARI, A TRAGEDY.

PREFACE.

THE subject of the following Play is taken from a domestic tragedy in the history of Venice, and was suggested to the Authoress by an interesting narrative of that event in Dr. Moore's Travels. It is scarcely, perhaps, necessary to say here in prose, what the Prologue repeats in verse, that her piece was not only completed, but actually presented to Covent Garden Theatre, before the publication of Lord Byron's well-known drama: a fact which happily exculpates her from any charge of a vain imitation of the great Poet, or of a still vainer rivalry.

PROLOGUE.

FOR riches famed of yore, and once as free
As her own element, the bounding sea,
Fair Venice now, fall'n from her "palmy state,"
Broods o'er her palace-city desolate;
Each mart deserted, each Palladian hall
Vacant and ruinous, proclaims her fall.
Yet still one triumph of her ancient fame
Gilds her decay, and lingers round her name;
'T is that beneath the proud Venetian dome
The Tragic Muse hath fixed her favourite home;
'T is that her very name makes young hearts glow
With deep remembrance of some glorious woe.
There Shylock whetted his relentless knife;
There poor Othello won his murdered wife;
There Pierre, stout traitor, the awed State defied;
There Jaffier loved, and Belvidera died.
And there the immortal Bard, who all too soon
Fell in the blaze of Fame's effulgent noon,
Lamented Byron! twice a tale hath told
Of princely anguish in the days of old:
How 'gainst the Senate Faliero fired
With vengeful hate by their stern doom expired;
And *his* severer fate, condemned to try
His guiltless son, the good Doge Foscari.
That tale of woe, but with an humbler flight
And weaker wing, our Authoress of to-night
Hath brought before ye. Deem not of it worse
That 't is a theme made sacred by his verse.
Ere his bold Tragedy burst into day,
Her trembling hand had closed this woman's play.
A different track she follows—Oh! forgive
Her errors ye, who bid the Drama live!
To your indulgence she commends her cause,
And hopes, yet dares not ask, your kind applause.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FOSCARI, *Doge of Venice.*
FRANCESCO FOSCARI, *his Son.*
COUNT ERIZZO, } *Venetian Senators.*
COUNT ZENO, }
DONATO, }
COSMO, *Donato's Son.*
CELSO, *a follower of Count Erizzo.*
Senators, Jailors, Officers, and Gentlemen.

Ladies.

CAMILLA, *Donato's Daughter.*
LAURA, *his Niece.*

Scene—VENICE.

FOSCARI.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

St. Mark's Place.

Count Erizzo and Celso meeting Donato.

Don. GOOD-morrow, Count Erizzo, you are early.
Are you bound to the Palace?
Eriz. Ay, Donato,
The common destination; but I go
With an old friend.
Don. What, Celso, thou turned courtier!
Cel. I am a suitor to his Highness, Sir,
With Count Erizzo's aid.
Don. What is your suit?
Eriz. One of the procurators died last night;
And honest Celso here would fain succeed
To that good office.
Don. None more capable.
You will not fail.
Eriz. Scarcely, I think;——and yet
I hardly know. The old Doge likes me not:

There have been murmurs in the senate, cousin,
At these long wasting wars; and he, I hear,
Suspects me. I have doubts. From you, indeed,
One word———
Don. It shall be said. Give me the paper.
Yes, at one word from me—the Doge and I
Are friends, old friends, the friends of forty years;
Besides we have a pair of hopeful sons,
Friends from the cradle upwards.
Eriz. And those friends
May soon be brothers. Will not thy Camilla
Be Foscari's bride, when his rough mistress War
Shall loose him from her arms?
Don. Ay; he'll return
Too soon, whene'er he comes, to steal away
My age's darling. Yet is he a boy
Full of high thoughts, a noble, princely boy,
Kindly and generous; one that may deserve
Even her.——Well, give me this petition, Count.
Look on the post as certain. [*Exit.*
Cel. How can I
Repay——He's gone. Think'st thou he will succeed?
Eriz. I know not. Either way works well for us.
If he succeed, then will our party gain
A firmer foot in Venice; if he fail,
We gain Donato.
Cel. Say'st thou so?
Eriz. I know him.
He's of a temper kind, and quick, and warm;
A powerful partizan, but easily sway'd
By flattery or anger. Of such tools
Are Faction's rank composed, not officered.
Celso, we'll have this Doge unbonneted,
This Doge who wears his load of four-score years
Easier than I my forty. He contemns
Me and my brother nobles; he may learn
To know and fear our power. I tell you, Sir,
These brows of mine do ache for that same bonnet.
And ere this day be ended———
Cel. 'Tis, my Lord,
A golden moment. The young Foscari
Is safe with Sforza in the Milan wars.
Eriz. Would I were sure of that! This is indeed
The only moment. Celso, I have here,
How intercepted boots not, letters from
Both generals to the Senate. They have gained
A signal victory; Brescia is freed;
And Sforza gives the unshared, unmingled praise
To Foscari. We must unthrone the Doge
Ere this news reach the city; for the people
Adore the Foscari. Faugh! I am weary
Of this good Doge, this venerable Doge,
This popular Doge, this Doge who courts and wooes
The noisy rabble, whilst the Senators
He elbows from their seats. And for the son,
With his hot valour and proud lack of pride—
I hate them both. We must not lose an hour—
The people must not hear—
Cel. The Senate hates them.
Eriz. Ay, but the Senate—
Cel. Well, my Lord, the Senate—
Eriz. Fy! I am one of them; I must not tell
The secrets of the Council. We are not
So stubborn as we seem; the popular voice
Finds there an echo; and besides, the Doge
Hath friends. Here comes one.

Enter Count Zeno.

A fair morning to you,
Count Zeno. I have scarcely seen you since
Your lingering sickness. You look cheerily.
Zeno. The air of this new day is sweet and freshening,
And breathes a health into the veins. I trust
You need no renovating; yet to step
From a sick bed and a dark silent room
Into the pure and balmy air of June,
With the bright sun lighting so blue a sky,
And sparkling on the waters all around,
Full of the living noise of trade or mirth,
Air, earth, and sea, all motion—it is like
Returning from the tomb to this fair world
Of life and sunshine! Such delight is well
Worth a sharp fever.
Eriz. Nevertheless am I
Content with your report. A homelier joy
Suffices me.
Zeno. You are the happier man.
Are you for the palace?
Eriz. No. We wait a friend.
Zeno. Then I must say good-morrow. I am somewhat
In haste to-day.
Eriz. Good-morrow, Count. [*Exit Zeno.*
That man
Wears in his courtly smile the consciousness
Of his high influence—the prime favourite he!
Did you not see how graciously he stooped
To me his equal, even as he had been
Himself a prince—proud minion!——Doge, beware!
Beware!——Look, look, Donato too hath found
A check! See, how he chafes! See!

Enter Donato.

Don. Take thy paper!
I am refused. Good-morrow!
Eriz. Nay, come back.
Can this be possible? Refused! Donato
Refused by Foscari!
Don. I was a fool
To ask;—a double fool to pin my faith
Upon this Doge's ermine.
Celso. I regret
More than my failure the indignity———
Don. Forget it, Sir.——How go these Milan wars?
I say, Erizzo, could'st thou have believed
The proudest he in Venice would have dared
To treat me with such scorn?
Eriz. What! did he scorn thee?
Don. He chid me, schooled me, blamed my easy temper,
That lent an ear to every cunning tale,
A voice to every false designing knave:
Cel. Dared he!
Don. And this to me! Why art thou not
Amazed, Erizzo?
Eriz. No. It but confirms
What I have heard and scarce believed. The Doge

Is grown so old that he forgets his friends.
Men say—it can't be true—and yet men say—
Don. What?
Eriz. That the Doge repents his son's betrothment
To thy Camilla.
Don. He shall never wed her.
Sir, if this Doge were king of all the earth,
He might have found a higher, prouder title
In father to Camilla! They are free.
Camilla's claims shall never interrupt——
What is his project?
Eriz. Our great enemy,
The Duke of Milan, hath a young, fair daughter,
And she, they say——
Don. Tush! I have seen her, man!
A dark-browed wench, a beetle-browed—no more
To match with my Camilla than that Gondola
With the Bucentaur!—I will back, and tell him
That Foscari is free. Mine own Camilla!
My prattling, pretty one! I'll back and tell him.
Eriz. No; rather come with me. What I have said
Is hearsay or conjecture; what is true
Is the misgovernment, the public wrongs
Of this old Foscari, too old to sway
The power of Venice. This is not a place
For such discourse. Come with me to my palace.
Don. I thought he loved my daughter!
Cel. Thou art sure.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

An Apartment in the Ducal Palace.

The Doge and Count Zeno.

Zeno. Good-morrow to your Highness.
Doge. Dearest Zeno,
This is no common pleasure. Thou the latest
Of our late revellers, whom the sun scarce sees
Till half his course be run—
Zeno. Oh! good my Lord,
I meet him often ere I go to bed,
The bright reproachful tell-tale!
Doge. To see thee,
But lately risen from a sharp sickness too,
Afoot so early! There must be some cause,
Some kind or pleasant cause — What brings thee, Count?
Zeno. This letter!
Doge. No petition for the post
Vacant by poor Venoni's death?
Zeno. Oh! no.
Doge. I should have grieved within one little hour
To say twice No to two dear friends. You met Donato?
Zeno. Yes, so chafed he saw me not.
Your Highness knows his temper.
Doge. And I fear
Tried it too much. He asked of me that office
For a known villain, an unusual compound
Of ruffian and of knave, the follower
Of his kinsman, Count Erizzo.
Zeno. Then the Count
Was waiting for Donato. I am grieved
He should be so companioned.
Doge. He flung from me
Ere I could tell him that the post was given
To Signor Loredano, a ripe scholar
Pining in penury, at the pressing instance
Of his own son.
Zeno. Cosmo! How like is that
To his unwearied kindness.
Doge. There is not,
Unless I may except my Foscari,
A youth in Venice who can vie in aught
With Cosmo.
Zeno. And they are as different
As the bright sun and gentle moon, the sea
In sparkling motion and the quiet land.
The one a stirring, brave, and honest soldier,
The other a pale student.
Doge. Bless them both,
My noble boys! They have always loved like brothers,
And soon I hope my pretty sweet Camilla
Will give them that dear title.
Zeno. Have you had
Tidings of Foscari lately?
Doge. Not for long,
Longer than common.
Zeno. Last night at St. Mark's
There was a rumour floating—none could trace
Its source—of a great victory obtained
By Foscari and Sforza.
Doge. Heaven grant it!
Sure we shall hear to-day,—Now, dearest Count,
What is your will? You led the old man on
To talk of his dear children, till in sooth
He had forgotten the whole world. Now say
What is that scroll?
Zeno. My lord—I almost fear—
Dost thou believe in soothsayers?
Doge. No!—Yes!—
Not much. Why dost thou ask?
Zeno. Wilt thou not answer?
Doge. Count Zeno, thou art one to whom, being wise,
A wise man may confess the cherished folly
That lurks within his breast. But tell it not
To fools, good Zeno.
Zeno. Then thou dost believe?
Doge. I have some cause. What! didst thou never hear
Of the old prediction that was verified
When I became the Doge?
Zeno. An old prediction!
Doge. Some seventy years ago—it seems to me
As fresh as yesterday—being then a lad
No higher than my hand, idle as an heir,
And all made up of gay and truant sports,
I flew a kite, unmatched in shape or size,
Over the river—we were at our house
Upon the Brenta then; it soared aloft,
Driven by light vigorous breezes from the sea,
Soared buoyantly, till the diminished toy
Grew smaller than the falcon when she stoops
To dart upon her prey. I sent for cord,
Servant on servant hurrying, till the kite
Shrank to the size of a beetle: still I called
For cord, and sent to summon father, mother,

My little sisters, my old halting nurse,—
I would have had the whole world to survey
Me and my wondrous kite. It still soared on,
And I stood bending back in ecstasy,
My eyes on that small point, clapping my hands,
And shouting, and half envying it the flight
That made it a companion of the stars,
When close beside me a deep voice exclaimed—
Ay, mount! mount! mount!–I started back, and saw
A tall and aged woman, one of the wild
Peculiar people whom wild Hungary sends
Roving through every land. She drew her cloak
About her, turned her black eyes up to Heaven,
And thus pursued:—Ay, like his fortunes, mount,
The future Doge of Venice! And before
For very wonder any one could speak,
She disappeared.

Zeno. Strange! Hast thou never seen
That woman since?

Doge. I never saw her more.
After a slight brief search, the wonder sank
Into a jest. My mother for a while
Called me her pretty Doge, her madcap Doge,
And ran a thousand fondling changes through
On that proud title; and my sisters long
Talked of the tall Hungarian. None believed
But my old nurse.

Zeno. And thou?

Doge. Long time in me
The seeds of faith lay dormant; till at last
As youth's gay wildness sobered, and ambition
Grew stronger in my soul, the prophecy
Knocked at my thoughts, and I by fits believed
That which I wished were true. Now for thy scroll;—
Whence comes it?

Zeno. Even such an aged crone,
So tall, so habited, stayed me last night
At my own door, and with an earnest voice,
Her shaking hand prest on my arm, implored
That, as I loved the good Doge Foscari,
I would at his first waking give him this.

Doge. She must be dead! Full seventy years ago—
And then her locks were grizzled!—She is dead.
And what, at fourscore years, have I to do
With fate or fortune! My long race is run.

Zeno. Read it at least.

Doge. (*reads.*) "The ducal bonnet trembles on thy "brow, Doge of Venice, trembles—and will fall, though "the stars themselves show me not when. Grant the "first boon that shall be asked of thee to-morrow, or "before the next sun rises thy very heart shall be rent "in twain."
Grant the first boon! Why, my good Signor Celso,
This is too palpable. Grant the first boon!
Make thee the Procurator! Fy! Fy! Fy!
Erizzo's talent hath forsaken him;
This cheat is shallow. They have heard the tale
I told thee, and this paltry poor device—
Off to the waves and winds!

Zeno. Yet hath the Count
A party in the state; and for Donato,
Kind, hasty, generous and beloved, his power
May vie with thine.

Doge. But never will be used
Against me, Zeno. I should hate myself
Could I suspect Donato. Count, we'll go
Together to the Senate. Thou shalt see
The quick relenting of his sudden wrath,
His graceful self-rebuke, his honest love.

Zeno. I'll gladly be converted.

Doge. Doubt him not.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

An Apartment in the Donato Palace.

Camilla and Laura.

Cam. Laura, hast thou seen Cosmo?

Lau. Not to-day.

Cam. Sure, he'll not cheat us of his early smiles,
His gay good-morrow, that best joy of home
When dear friends meet in morning cheerfulness.

Lau. And such a cheerfulness! and such a smile!
None are like his.

Cam. None! Hast thou never seen
The heaven of kindness that in Foscari's eyes
Shines under those dark brows? And I'm the sister
Of that dear Cosmo, the selected bride
Of that still dearer Foscari! Oh, cousin,
I am the blessedest creature that e'er trod
This laughing earth! There is but only one
Can hope to be so happy;—thou, perchance,
When Cosmo———

Enter Cosmo.

We were speaking of thee.

Cos. Well,
I trust, fair maids. My gentle lady Laura,
Say yes to that.

Cam. Feed not man's vanity;
Let not thy blushes answer.

Cos. Sister mine,
'T is thou art clothed in blushes. Why the dawn
Opening her ardent eyes, and shaking wide
Her golden locks on the Adriatic wave,
The bright Aurora, she is sad and pale
And spiritless compared to thee. Hast thou
Been Psyche's errand? Or hath some fair vision
Lapt thee in loveliness?

Cam. I think I dreamt
Of heaven; for I was in a place where care
And fear and sorrow came not, self-sustained
On wings such as the limner's cunning lends
To the Seraphim, and singing like a bird
From the deep gladness of a merry heart
The whole night long. And when the morning came
And I awakened in this work-day world,
The spell was on me still; and still is on
The buoyancy, the joy, the certain hope
Of happiness. Brother, are there no news
Of Foscari?

Cos. None certain. Yet is there
A balminess of hope; and stirring rumours
Come pattering round us, with a pleasant sound,
Like the large drops before a summer shower.
They talk of Foscari and victory——

Cam. There hath then been a battle. Is he safe?

Cos. As safe as I myself.

Cam. Fy! what a fool
Am I to tremble so! And art thou sure?
Cos. There is no certainty, but such a hope
As is her forerunner. Hath not my father
Heard of this victory?
Lau. He hath been long
Gone to the palace, and wished you to follow.
Cos. Gladly. I have a good man's gratitude
To pay to the good Doge. I must away
Or I shall miss the Senate.
Cam. Thou wilt send
The tidings, Cosmo?
Cos. Surely.
Cam. Quickly?
Cos. Yes.
Cam. Good tidings, Cosmo.
Cos. Yes. My pretty cousin,
Hast thou no charge to give?
Lau. Why bring this tale,
This happy tale thyself.
Cam. Ay, come thyself,
Dear Cosmo, and farewell. [*Exit Cosmo.*
Now, Laura mine,
Let us to the high balcony. I need
Fresh air and sun and sparkling sights and sounds
To help sustain this happiness, this hope,
Which weighs almost like fear. My dearest, come.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Senate.

Count Erizzo, Donato, and Senators.

Eriz. He rules us as a king—this Foscari,
An absolute king, haughty and imbecile
As any Eastern sovereign! He degrades
The old Nobility, contemns the Senate,
And cringes to the people—a mob courtier!
A greedy swallower of popular praise!
Sen. He hates the Nobles.
Eriz. But this very day
Did he refuse to my dear kinsman here
A post, that he requested for a man
Who long hath served the state.
Sen. Refuse Donato!
Eriz. Even so. He is of the Senate, is the head
Of an old powerful house, is rich, is noble,
Is nobly loved. Are not these crimes enough
To stir our Doge's wrath?
Don. No more of this!
Eriz. Then his misgovernment, his tedious wars,
His waste of blood and treasure, that his son,
That idol of the soldiery, may glut
His lust of glorious battle! Senators,
Why should we thus submit to what we hate?
Why bow to whom we made? The Doge is now
Too old for his high office. Good my lords,
Let us resume our power. Is there no brow
In Venice that may bear this ducal crown
Save one? Will it not sit as gracefully
On vigorous manhood's clustering curls? On thine,
Donato? Or Pisani, upon thine?
Or any man of us? Lords, have ye changed
Your purpose? That the Doge may be deposed
Is the fixed law of Venice. Are ye firm?
This is the moment.
Sen. He must be unthroned.
Eriz. Then be it done to-day.
2d Sen. I'll join thee, Count.
3d Sen. And I.
Eriz. Donato, thou wilt best propose——
Don. Oh no! He hath been harsh——but I have
loved him——
We are old friends.
Sen. Do it thyself, Erizzo.
Don. But gently, reverently.

Enter Doge, Count Zeno, and other Senators.

Doge. My gracious lords,
I greet ye well! We are no truants, Sirs,
This full assemblage honours our fair Venice,
Honours her senators. Signor Donato——
Nay shun me not——That post was promised to——
Thou wilt not hear! I have too often borne
With thy infirmity. Forget not, Sir,
That thou 'rt my friend, or I must needs remember
That I 'm thy prince. Now to our business, lords.
Eriz. Are there no letters from the army?
Doge. None.
But there is through the city a loud bruit
Of victory.
Eriz. In a well-ordered state
There is no pause for rumour; certainty
Outspeeds her lying rival.
Doge. Think'st thou, Count,
That my old heart is quiet in this pause?
Thou hast no boy in yonder battle-field,
Or thou would'st know how thirstily the soul
Of a father pants in his suspense for truth,
One single drop of sweet or bitter truth.

Enter Cosmo.

Who 's that?
Sen. Cosmo Donato, please you, Sir.
Doge. Oh, our young Secretary! Sit by me,
I had just missed thee, Cosmo. Was thy friend
Content?
Cos. Oh never gratitude was clothed
In such pure joy. I would your Highness saw
The happiness you caused.
Doge. Hush! Count Erizzo,
You were about to speak.
Eriz. I was; and yet
I gladly would delay, gladly resign
A painful duty.
Doge. If it touch me, Sir,
Speak.
Eriz. Is there not, my lord, a law in Venice,
That if the Doge, by sickness, grief, or age,
Become incapable, he be removed?
Doge. There is. Say on.
Eriz. What need I to say more!
Know we not all the good Doge Foscari
Is turned of fourscore years? Fitter for him
To lay down the proud bonnet, which doth weigh
So heavily on those white hairs, and pass

In calm serene repose the evening hours
Of his unsullied life. So shall his sun,
Setting in tranquil beauty, leave a train
Of pure and cloudless light; so praised and loved
Shall he sink down to rest.

Doge. This is not all.
On, on, my lord!

Eriz. Fitter for us a man
Who shall remember in this state of Venice
There is another power great as himself,
And greater than the people. Howsoe'er
Thou hast the bearing, Doge, of a born prince,—
To us, thy subjects, thou art but the head
Of the Venetian nobles. Thy proud rank
Was given by them, thy equals. Each great name
That now surrounds thee hath in turn adorned
Thy splendid office. Not a noble house
But is a link in the resplendent chain
Of old Venetian story. We are born
Lords of the Adriatic; not a name
But hath been vowed her spouse. Think not such names
Are common sounds; they have a music in them,
An odorous recollection, they are part
Of the old glorious past. Their country knows
And loves the lofty echo which gives back
The memory of the buried great; and we
Their sons—Oh our own names are watchwords to us
That call to valour and to victory,
To goodness and to freedom. This hast thou
Forgotten. Every creeping artisan,
Every hard-handed smoky slave is nearer
To our great Doge than we: to them all smiles
And princely graciousness—to us all frowns
And kingly pride. Fitter for us a Doge
Of a congenial spirit, to preside
Over our councils, and to guard and guide
The Senate and the State.

Zeno. Perhaps Erizzo
Would deign to wear this care-encompass'd crown?
Fy! Fy!

Eriz. My voice is for Donato, Sir!

Cos. My father Doge of Venice? Never! Never!
He will not, must not, shall not! All the world
Would join in one reproach; the very stones
Of Venice would cry out; and we, his children—
Oh we should die of grief and shame! What, he
Supplant his friend, his dearest friend! Oh never!
Father, thou wilt not?

Sen. Silence!

Eriz. Signor Cosmo,
Thou art not yet a Senator.

Cos. My lords,
I pray your pardon; but if I had seen
A venomed serpent coiling round his limbs
And pressing him within its deadly clasp,
Would ye have blamed the cry that Nature sent?—
Thou wilt not be the Doge?

Don. Never!

Cos. My father,
Forgive me that I feared. How could I fear!
Forgive me.

Doge. Noble boy!—Hast thou said all?
That I am old, and that I love the people?
Are these my crimes? Oh I am doubly guilty!
I love them all, even ye that love me not!
I cannot choose but love you, for ye are
Venetians, quick, and proud, and sparkling-eyed,
Venetians brave and free. Ye are the lords
Of the bright sea-built city, beautiful
As storied Athens; or the gorgeous pride
Of Rome, eternal Rome; greater than kings
Are ye, Venetian nobles—ye are free;
And that is greatness and nobility,
The source and end of power. That I have made
Liberty common as the common air,
The sun-light, or the rippling waves that wash
Our walls; that every citizen hath been
Free as a Senator; that I have ruled
In our fair Venice, as a father rules
In his dear household, nothing intermitting
Of needful discipline, but quenching fear
In an indulgent kindness; these ye call
My crimes. These are my boasts. Yes, I do love
The honest artisans; there 's not a face
That smiles up at me with a kindly eye
But sends a warmth into my heart, a glow
Of buoyant youthfulness. Age doth not freeze
Our human sympathies; the sap fails not,
Although the trunk be rugged. Age can feel,
And think, and act. Oh noble Senators,
Ye do mistake my crime. I am too young;
I am not like to die; and they who wait
Wax weary for my seat. I do not dote,
My Lord Erizzo; Yet—

(*Shouts without.*

Foscari! Foscari!

Doge. What mean those shouts?

Cos. Francesco Foscari!
There lives no other, whom a grateful people
Would greet as with one heart.

Enter Foscari.

Zeno. My Lord Francesco!

Doge. My son, my very son! Now I am young
And great and happy! Now I reign again.
My noblest son!

Fos. Father! Why this is joy
Deeper than victory! Dost feel my heart?

Doge. Art thou unhurt?

Fos. Untouched. I almost shame
To want one glorious scar. How well he is!
What fire is in his eyes! Cosmo, thou too!—
But I have tidings that the Doge must hear
Upon his throne. High tidings, gracious lords!
My father,—take thy state.

Eriz. (*aside.*) Lost! lost! All lost!
Another hour and that most hated boy
Had been most welcome!

Fos. (*to Cosmo.*) Still as lovely, Cosmo?
And still as true?

Cos. Yes! Yes!

Fos. Will not the Doge
Assume the accustomed seat?

Doge. My son, these lords,
These Senators, these mighty ones of Venice
Have found thy father old. Hadst thou returned
Some half hour later, thou hadst seen the throne

Filled by Donato, or his cousin Count.
Which hath thy voice, Francesco?
Fos. Thou not Doge!
Erizzo climb into thy honoured seat,
Honoured by thee! Or thou, Donato, thou
Join with this false, ungrateful, heartless senate,
This shadow and this mockery of wisdom,
To cast aside the best and truest heart
That ever made our Venice rich and proud
And great and happy, to throw off thy Prince
Like an old garment! Shame! Thou that didst call
Thyself his friend! Shame! shame! My dearest Cosmo,
This was a grief to thee. Oh shame! shame! shame!
Don. Rated again, and by a boy! I tell thee
I would not be the Doge.
Zeno. My Lord Francesco,
Thy tidings.
Fos. Take thy state, Doge Foscari.
From thee did I receive my maiden sword,
From thee my high commission; to none other
Will I resign them. Senators of Venice!
Ingrates! I bring ye victory and peace.
Victorious peace! Brescia is free, and Milan
Sues at your feet for peace. Her haughty Duke
Is Sforza's prisoner,—my prisoner, Doge,
And Sforza weds his heir.
Don. Ha!
Fos. (*giving letters to the Doge.*) Eight days hence
He will be here. See what he writes, my lord.
The Senate is amazed; yet from the field
We sent ye somewhat of this glorious tale.
Eriz. Those letters reached not Venice.
Fos. Count Erizzo,
I met the messenger, and staid my horse
To ask him of my father. He had stopt
Short of the palace, but had safely given
The packet to a Senator. Erizzo,
Thou wast the man. Look at him, ye that ever
Saw guilt ooze out in shame! Nay, tremble not;
I pardon thee. There is no other vengeance
For low dishonour. It would stain my sword
To dip it in thy blood.
Eriz. My Lord Francesco,
I yet may find a time——
Fos. I pardon thee.
Doge. Sforza says here, this Brescian victory
Was gained by thee. Zeno, read there—just there.
Fos. Here is the treaty, Doge, already signed
By Milan, Sforza, and myself; add thou
Thy venerable name, Doge Foscari.
So—having crowned a long and glorious reign
With glorious peace, let me, thy son, pluck off
This envied bonnet from thy honoured head.
Wear it the worthiest! Never will it clip
Within its golden circlet such high thoughts,
Such a brave love of freedom, such a warm
And generous faith in man. Proud lords of Venice,
Ye ne'er deserved him. My good sword, lie there!
I am no more your general. Pass we forth
Together, my dear father, private men—
Rich in the only wealth the world can give,
A spotless name.
Doge. Richest in thee. Nay, Zeno!
Zeno. Ye must not leave us, lords. Doge, if again
We had to choose, our choice again would fall
On Foscari. Is't not so?
Eriz. (*apart to a Sen.*) Sail with the stream——
Foscari!—I 'll find a time—
Senators. Foscari! Foscari!
Doge. One still is silent.
Cos. Now, my father, now!
For thy fame's sake.
Don. On Foscari.
Cos. Thanks! Thanks!
Now dare I look upon that reverend face,
And grasp this hand again.
Fos. Did we not know thee!
Doge. Senators, countrymen, at your behest
I wear once more the crown.
Fos. Oh, no! no! no!
Bear not again that burthen.
Doge. My Francesco,
Take up thy sword again, thy knightly sword—
I am too proud of thee!—thy stainless sword!
Now, good my lords, our fellow-citizens
Must be made happy in this glorious tale.
First to proclaim the peace; then, with meek hearts,
Lowlily, with a steadfast thankfulness
Pour out our homage to the Lord of Peace
In his own temple. This high duty o'er,
I bid ye to the palace; we must grace
Our soldier with some revelry. Donato,
Thou wilt be there, and Cosmo—will ye not?
And our Camilla, lady of the feast,
And of the heart. Come to us, dear Donato.
Eriz. (*apart to Don.*) Are all his taunts forgotten?
Don. No! I cannot.
Doge. Think better of it, Zeno!—Follow soon,
Francesco!—Zeno, is this storm the end
Of our dark prophecy?
[*Ex. Doge, Zeno, and Sen.*
Fos. Signor Donato,
I have a feeling here of deep old love
That tells me I have wronged thee. If I have,
Forgive me!
Cos. Father, can'st thou turn away
When Foscari speaks those words which mortal ear
Ne'er heard him utter?
Fos. If I did mistake,
'T was in my father's cause; 't was such a wrong
As Cosmo would have done for thee. Forgive me,
For her dear sake.
Eriz. (*to Don.*) Remember, "Shame!"
Don. Erizzo,
Think'st thou I can forget! Not even for her.
Stay me not, Cosmo. [*Exit Donato.*
Cos. Go, for I can trust
Thy kind heart, father! Love, who is so strong
In gentleness. Love and his bondsman Time
Will conquer anger. We must now submit.
To-morrow——
Fos. Oh! what a long life of love
Must I give up! To-morrow! I am here,
Here in this happy Venice, which she makes
The palace of her beauty, where the air
Is sweetened by her breath, and her young voice

Floats on the breeze like music. I am here—
Divided from her but by envious walls,
Clouds that conceal my sun. Had'st thou but seen
How I urged on my mettled courser's speed,
My matchless Barbary horse, till his pure jet
Was pounced with snowy flakes; or how I strove
To graft my hot impatience on the dull
And sluggish boatmen: or with what a stroke
I cleft the water: or how leapt ashore——

Cos. I can believe 't——

Fos. That I might sooner gain
By one half hour her presence! And to bear
This longing till to-morrow! Thou must say
All this and more, much more, of love and hope
And fond impatience. Tell her——

Cos. Thou thyself
Shalt tell her these sweet things, mixed with a world
Of lovers' eloquence, of looks and sighs,
And broken words. Ay, Foscari, thou thyself!

Fos. But how? Where? When?

Cos. To-night. For one short hour
Steal from the feast its hero. My good father,
Who, like a bird, fore-runs the summer sun,
Seeks his nest early. Thou may'st ask for me
And find Camilla.

Fos. Blessings on thee, friend!

Eriz. To-night! [*Exit.*

Fos. We have a hearer.

Cos. He is gone.

Fos. Beware that smooth Erizzo, dearest Cosmo,
Beware!

Cos. Nay, Foscari, let me caution thee
Beware suspicion! Think him innocent
Till thou hast proved him guilty. Blackening doubt
Beseems not thy clear breast. Sweep it away.

Fos. Oh, how I love the beautiful mistakes
Of thy unbounded charity! That man—
Didst thou not see him whispering Donato?
We will not think of him. Doth my Camilla
Talk of me often?

Cos. Yes.

Fos. Oh, I was sure!
But it is such a joy to hear that yes!
Doth she—— (*Shouts without.*)

Cos. Hark! thou art called. The citizens
Demand their General. Go!

Fos. I'd rather face
An enemy in battle.

Cos. Thou wast wont
To love the people, Foscari.

Fos. I would drain
The last drop in my veins for them and freedom;
But these loud shouts, this popular acclaim,
This withering, perishing blast of vulgar praise,
Whose noisy echoes do shake off the flush
Of Fame's young blossoms—Oh, I hate them all!
True honour should be silent, spotless, bright,
Enduring; trembling even at the breath
That woos her beauty.

Cos. Come. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Room in the Erizzo Palace.

Count Erizzo entering.

Eriz. Seek Signor Celso.—Baffled, spurned, contemned,
Pardoned—the insolent! But he shall feel——
All lost! For old Donato, shallow fool,
Hath in his anger a relenting spirit,
And will yield easy way at the first tear
The fair Camilla sheds—the very first!
She has but to cry Father, and to hang
About his neck, and his light wrath will melt
Like snowflakes in that rain. How the dull Senate
Cowered at the haughty soldier's feet! Even I——
Thinks he I too can pardon! He shall find
My hate immortal. Nothing stands between
Me and the crown but Foscari. To-night——
This Celso, as I have good cause to know,
Can wield a dagger well—to-night he goes
To meet his lady love—to-night—alone—
I can detain young Cosmo.

Enter Celso.

Celso, friend,
Thou comest at a wish. Where hast thou been?

Cel. Where I am stunned with shouts of Foscari,
And dazzled with the glare of tinselled gauds
Hung out to honour him. The palaces
Are clothed with tissues, velvets, cloths of gold
And richer tapestry. The canals all strewed
With floating flowers, through which dark gondolas
Dart as through some bright garden. All is lost,
And I must leave dear Venice. Count, farewell!

Eriz. Why must thou go?

Cel. Ask my hard creditors.

Eriz. Celso, I have a thousand ducats here
For him that rids me of a clinging plague.

Cel. A thousand ducats!

Eriz. Hast thou still thy dagger?
In, and I'll tell thee more. This very night!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Donato Palace.

Donato, Camilla, and Laura.

Laura. Camilla, why so drooping?

Cam. This hath been
A long and weary day; there is a heat,
A gloom, a heavy closeness. See, this rose
Is withering too, that was so fresh and fair—
The white musk-rose—that which he used to love.

Laura. It was no day for Venice. 'T would have been
A calm sweet stillness in our country home,
Bowered amid green leaves and growing flowers,
With fragrant airs about us, and soft light,
And rustling birds.

Don. The sky portends a storm:
To bed, Camilla!

Cam. Father! dearest father,
Have I displeased thee?
Don. No! To bed! To bed!
Laura, good night. [*Exit.*
Cam. He used to call me child,
His dearest child; and when I grasped his hand
Would hold me from him with a long fond gaze,
And stroke my hair and kiss my brow, and bid
Heaven bless his sweet Camilla! And to-night
Nought but to bed! to bed!
Laura. Believe it, cousin,
A thing of accident.
Cam. And Cosmo comes not;
He sends not to me—he that never broke
His plighted word before! And Laura! Laura!
Foscari is in Venice, is returned
Triumphant, and he comes not, sends not, Laura,
And when I ask of him, my father frowns
Sternly on his poor child.

Re-enter Donato.

Don. My pretty one,
I could not go to rest till I had said
Heaven bless thee!
Cam. My dear father!
Don. What is this?
A tear?
Cam. Oh! gratitude, and love, and joy
Are in that tear, dear father!—and one doubt—
One fear—
Don. Sweetest, good night!
Cam. Foscari, father?
Don. To bed, my own Camilla! [*Exit.*
Cam. Not a word.
Lau. Something works in him deeply.
Cam. Yet how kind,
How exquisitely fond! Cosmo must know,
And, Laura, Cosmo never flies from thee,
And thou may'st ask—
Lau. I will, I will, sweet coz!
Look, dearest, at the glancing gondolas
Shooting along, each with its little light,
Like stars upon the water. Whither go they?
Cam. To the proud Ducal Palace, where they hold
High feasting in his honour. There the dance,
And the quaint masque, and music's softer strains
Minister to his praises.
Lau. And the ear
That would drink in so eagerly that sweet praise,
The heart that would leap up at every sound
Rejoicing, the glad eyes—Would thou wert there!
Cam. Ah! would I were, since Foscari is there;
That is enough for me! Where'er he is,
In tent or battle-field—Hark! what is that?
That music? Oh 't is he! 't is Foscari!
Dost thou not know the strain, the wandering strain,
Trembling and floating like a spirit's song,
With many a—Hark again!—'T is he! 't is he!
That air belongs to him even as a name;
It thrills my very heart. Am I not pale?
Lau. No; the bright blood floats trembling in thy cheek,
Most like that wandering music.
Cam. There is pain
In this excess of joy.
Lau. He comes.

Enter Foscari.

Fos. Camilla!
Sweetest Camilla!
Cam. Thou art come at last,
Francesco!
Fos. My Camilla—Come at last!
Why this is chiding! Can'st thou chide, Camilla?
Lau. Ay, or she were no woman.
Fos. Lady Laura!
Forgive me that I saw you not. Camilla,
Chide on—nay, thou art smiling—Come begin!
I 'd rather hear thy chidings than the praise
Of all the world beside. Let me but hear
Thy voice, whate'er thou speakest.
Cam. Dear Francesco,
Thou hast been long away.
Fos. Oh very long!
Cam. And where?
Fos. Away from thee. That is enough;
Where thou art not I keep no count of place,
Nor time, nor speech, nor act.
Cam. Yet tell me where.
Fos. Where I have dreamt of courts and camps and fields
Of glorious battle. A long weary dream
To him, who loves to bask him in thy smiles,
And live upon thy words.
Cam. Yet hast thou lost
Ten weary hours to-day.
Fos. Why this, indeed,
Is chiding, my Camilla. I have been
At the Palace, at the Senate hall, at Church,
Have undergone a grand procession, love,
And a long dreary feast.
Cam. And is that all?
Fos. And is not that enough? Would'st thou crowd in
More tediousness? Oh thou unmerciful!
Cam. But why not first—sure he is thinner, Laura,
Thinner and paler?
Lau. Nay, he is the same.
Cam. Why not first come to me?
Fos. Perhaps I love
To visit my heart's treasure by that light
When misers seek their buried hoards; to steal
Upon the loved one, like a mermaid's song,
Unseen and floating between sea and sky;
To creep upon her in love's loveliest hour,
Not in her daylight beauty with the glare
Of the bright sun around her, but thus pure
And white and delicate, under the cool moon
Or lamp of alabaster. Thus I love
To think of thee, Camilla; thus with flowers
About thee and fresh air, and such a light,
And such a stillness; thus I dream of thee,
Sleeping or waking.
Cam. Dost thou dream of me?
Fos. Do I! without that lovely mockery,
That sweet unreal joy, how could I live
When we are parted? Do I dream of thee!

Dearest, what ails thee? Thou art not to-night
As thou art wont, thine eyes avoid my gaze,
Thy white hand trembles and turns cold in mine.
What ails thee, dearest? Hast thou heard——What fear
Disturbs thee thus, Camilla?

Cam. I will tell thee.
Cosmo is absent; my dear father grieved;
There is high feasting in thy princely home,
And I not there; and thou not here till now,
At midnight, when my father sleeps, and Cosmo
Is still away. Are ye all friends? Say, Foscari,
The very truth.

Fos. Well! Thou shalt hear the truth.
Cheer thee! 'T is nought to weep for. At the Senate
There were to-day some hasty words.—Erizzo,
Thy subtle kinsman, he was most to blame—
I was too hot, too rash; but I implored
Donato's pardon, and am half forgiven;
Though yielding to the crafty Count, he shunned
To sup with us to-night.

Cam. Ah! I had feared—

Fos. There is no cause for fear. This sudden storm
Is but a July shower that sweeps away
The o'erblown roses. Cosmo is our friend,
Our truest warmest friend; and well thou know'st
Thy father's kindly heart; he loves thee so;
Ay, and he loves me too; and he shall love me
Better than ever.

Lau. He shall love! Lord Foscari,
Thou 'rt a true soldier. Wilt thou conquer love?

Fos. Surely.

Lau. And how?

Fos. By love, and gratitude,
And deep respect, and true observance, Laura.
Shake not thy head, Camilla. He shall love me.
What! is he not thy father? Smile on me.
Think'st thou that if I feared to lose thee, I
Should be thus tranquil? [*Exit Laura.*

Cam. No. But at my heart
There is a heavy sense of coming pain,
A deep and sad foreboding.

Fos. Thou hast been
Vexed to-day, sweetest, and thy weary thoughts
Tinge the bright future with the gloomy past.

Cam. Well, be it so. And yet I would to heaven
That this one night were over!—Where is Laura?

Fos. She glided off, with a kind parting smile,
And a quick sparkle in her eye, that said
Ye will not miss me!

Cam. Ay, her merry glance;
But we do miss her. 'T was a saucy thought,
My pretty gentle Laura!

Fos. She is grown.

Cam. Yes, tall and beautiful and rarely good.
Oh 't is the kindest heart! We think she 'll make——
What is that noise?

Fos. Nothing. A distant door.
What startles thee, Camilla?

Cam. My own heart.
Hark how it beats, painfully, fearfully!
Hush! hush! Again that noise!

Fos. 'T is thunder, love,
And that hath stirred thy spirits. Cheer thee, dearest;
A soldier's wife should be as brave as steel.
What didst thou say of Laura?

Cam. She will make
A sweet wife for our Cosmo.

Fos. And doth he
Love the young beauty?

Cam. He hath scarce forgot
To treat her as a child, the dearest child,
The loveliest and the gentlest,—but a child.
Francesco, thou must praise her——Ha! again!
That is no thunder-clap. My father's door——
Oh go! go! go!

Fos. My dear Camilla, no!
Thou canst not fear me, I will be as calm,
As humble——

Cam. Go! go! go! I die with fear;——
He is so rash, so sudden!—He will kill thee!

Fos. Here! under his own roof! In thy dear sight!
Thy own dear father!

Cam. He will part us, Foscari!
Go!

Fos. Well, I go. But my Camilla——

Cam. Go!

Fos. Dearest, farewell!

Cam. Not that way!—That! there! there!
Leap from the window in the corridor,
From the low balcony!

Fos. Farewell! [*Exit.*

Cam. I 'm glad
That he is gone. Fear hath so mastered me
I stumble on the level floor. Thank heaven
They are both safe, my dearest Foscari,
My dearest father! There 's no danger now;
And yet the night grows wilder. What a flash!
And I have sent him forth into the storm,
I, that so love him! I have sent him forth
Into this awful storm! Protect him, Heaven!
I thought I heard the window—Can those steps
Be his?

Don. (*without.*) Help! help! base traitor! Foscari!
Murder!

Enter Laura.

Lau. What 's that?

Cam. Undo the door—I cannot—
Undo the door! My father! [*Exeunt.*

Lau. (*behind the scenes.*) Who hath done
This horrible deed?

Cam. (*behind the scenes.*) My father! murder! murder!

SCENE II.

An illuminated Hall in the Ducal Palace.

Doge, Count Zeno, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Doge. Now for some stirring air to wake the spirits
Of mirth and motion. Sweet ones, to the dance!
Where is this Foscari? Gentles, in my youth
He had been held a recreant that forsook
The revel, and the light of ladies' eyes,
And play of twinkling feet. Degenerate boy!

Gent. Degenerate days! Ah! we could tell such tales
Of the deep merriment, the gorgeous banquet,

The high festivity of our old time!
Thou may'st smile, Zeno, but his Highness knows
Bright mirth is on the wane. Our puny sons
Show but faint flashes of their fathers' fire.
Zeno. Believe him not, fair maids! 'T is but the vaunt
Of vaunting age. Believe him not. Why, Moro,
Thy father in those mirthful days hath said
The same to thee, and his to him; yet still
'T is merry Venice. Forty years to come
We, too, may boast us of our jovial prime,
Nor yet the world grow sadder. Fear it not.
His Highness will not join thee, Signor Moro;
He is too youthful-hearted.
Doge. What a bribe
Is that to aid thy cause! But Moro's right;
We were fine gallants. Niece, I pr'ythee see
That all are welcomed. Where's thy sister, Melfi?
2d Gent. Not yet returned from Rome.
Doge. I would have had
All the fair stars of Venice here to-night
Shining in one bright galaxy.
Gent. We miss
Signor Donato's daughter.
Doge. Ay, indeed,
My pretty sweet Camilla!—Fair Oliva,
Let Trevisano lead thee to the dance.
Were I one ten years younger, trust me, Sir,
I'd not resign this hand. Now a light measure.
[*A dance.*
Is't not a peerless nymph? The youngest Grace
Leading her linked sisters through the maze
Of blossom'd myrtles upon Ida's side,
Is not so light of foot. Rest thee, dear maid.
What is that? Thunder?
Zeno. Yes: a fearful storm.
It rages awfully. Hark! there again!
Doge. Well; we must keep such coil of merriment
As shall outroar the rattling storm.

Enter Foscari.

Ah, truant!
How wilt thou make thy peace?
Fos. I read no war
In these fair looks.
Zeno. Peace is more perilous.
Fos. Ay, truly, Zeno.
Zeno. Whither hast thou been?
Watching her lattice but to catch a glimpse
Of the swift slender shadow that glides past
So gracefully, clouding the soft dim light?
Fos. Pooh! Pooh!
Zeno. And with a true devotion bent
Uncovered at her shrine? Why thou art wet!
This is some new device of gallantry,
Some trick of Milan courtship.
Fos. Tush, man, tush?
Ho! a brisk measure! Drown with merry notes
Count Zeno's merry riddles! Wilt thou dance
With me, dear lady? Do not say me No!
Lady. Oh, no!
Fos. Why that should mean, Oh yes!
Doge. Good niece,
Will not the Lady Claudia join the dance?
Seek her. I'm young and light enough to-night
To mingle there myself. What ails the music?
Quicker! Why break they off? Dear Zeno, ask.
Fos. Murdered! Impossible! I only left—
I am myself—It cannot be. Play on!
On with the dance!
Gent. Here is a man hath seen him,
One who still shakes with fear.
Fos. Bring him to me!
Where is he? Where?
Doge. Zeno, what is this tale?
Zeno. A tale of horror!

Enter Erizzo.

Eriz. Justice, Doge of Venice!
A Senator lies reeking in his blood,
Murdered in his own palace. Justice, Doge!
Fos. What Senator?
Eriz. Canst thou ask that? Donato.
Doge. Donato murdered! the beloved Donato!
The second name of Venice! Mine old friend!
Lords, to the council. This is not a tale
For woman's gentleness. Good night to all.
[*Exeunt Ladies, and some Gentlemen.*
Would he had ta'en my hand!
Fos. He is not dead—
It must be false, it shall be!
Eriz. What! dost thou
Doubt of Donato's death? Thou?
Fos. Hearken, Doge!
His voice hath mockery in it, sharp and loud
As the clear ring of metals: he speaks not
As we, who heard the tale, in broken words
And breathless; his teeth chatter not; his lips
Are firm; there is no trembling in his limbs,
No glare in his keen eyes. None but a fiend,
Fresh from the reek of murder, could so master
The human sympathy, the fellowship
Of Nature and of kind.
Doge. Yet wherefore—

Enter Cosmo.

Cos. Justice!
Fos. Beloved friend!
Cos. Off! Off! I come for justice,
For equal justice!
Doge. Thou shalt have it.
Cos. Doge!
For equal justice!
Doge. Was he not my friend?
Am I not thine?
Cos. Ay—so the murderer said!—
Friend! the word chokes me.
Fos. Grief hath turned his brain.
Doge. Thou shalt have justice.
Cos. 'T is no midnight thief,
No hired assassin, no poor petty villain;—
This is a fall as of a morning star,
A death such as the first great slayer saw
When Abel lay at his feet,—but I'll have justice!
There be hearts here will crack, old valiant hearts,
When they shall hear this tale,—but I'll have justice!
Doge. Go some one call the guard. [*Exit Erizzo.*
Name the assassin.
Cos. Have I not? Whither doth he fly!

Fos. Camilla!
My poor Camilla!
Cos. Thine! And the earth hears him
And opens not her womb! The heavens hear
And launch no thunderbolts! This work is mine.
Hold firm my heart.——Cousin! Erizzo!

Enter Erizzo and Guard.

Eriz. Seize
Francesco Foscari. Nay, stand not thus
Gazing on one another. Seize him. Doge,
He is the murderer.
Doge. Away with thee,
Traitor and slanderer! He is my son——
Stir not a man of ye!—My son, the idol
Of city and of camp. His life hath been
One blaze of honour. Come to my old arms,—
Speak not a word—thy name is pledge enough,
My son!
Eriz. Ye know your duty. Seize him, soldiers.
Fos. Approach me at your peril. Know you not
This very morning how yon serpent lay
Under my heel unbruised, a thing of scorn?
Look not upon us, lords, with doubting eyes,
Ye dare not doubt me—even to deny
Is in some sort a stain!—My shield is bright.
Ye force me to these vaunts! I could not think
A crime.
Eriz. Bear hence the murderer. (*Aside.*) Palsies wither
The cowardly arm and plotting brain that feared
To strike him dead at once! (*Aloud.*) Seize him, I say.
Fos. Now he that dares!
Cos. Francesco Foscari,
I do arrest thee for this murder.
Fos. Thou!
Come forth into the light! Off with those plumes!
Look at me! Is this Cosmo? Hath some fiend
Put on that shape? Speak to me!
Cos. Murderer!
Fos. To-day he called me brother!—Deal with me
Even as ye will.
Eriz. Look to him, soldiers, well,
That he escape not.
Fos. Sir, the Foscari
Know not what that word means. I wait your pleasure.
Cos. Doge! Doth he hear me? Once I could have wept
For such a grief, for him; now I am steeled
By merciless misery, made pitiless
By one that hath no pity. Look! he stands
With such a calm of virtue on his brow,
As if he would outface the all-seeing God
With that proud seeming. Foscari, the dead
Shall cry aloud in heaven, and I on earth,
Till vengeance overtake thee. Doge of Venice,
I call on thee for justice on thy son.
Fos. Father!—Oh, start not!—I am innocent.
Hear that, and breathe again. Sir, I commit
My life, my honour, the unsullied name
Of my great ancestors, of him the greatest,
My living father—even his name I trust
To my just cause, and the just laws of Venice.
I am your prisoner.

[*Exeunt Foscari, guarded, Erizzo, and Cosmo.*

Zeno. Doge!
Doge. Those lights! Those lights!
They pierce my eye-balls, dart into my brain!
If there be any pity left i' the world,
Make me a darkness and a silence, Zeno,
That I may pray.
Zeno. Lead to his chamber, Sirs.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Hall of Justice.

Cosmo, Erizzo, Senators, and Officers.

Eriz. Is all prepared for trial?
Officer. All. The Doge
Approaches.
Sen. Will the Doge preside?
2d Sen. He comes.
How different from his step of yesterday!
How hurried, yet how slow!

Enter Doge and Count Zeno.

Zeno. Let me assist
Your Highness.
Doge. No.
Zeno. His robes encumber him;
Support them.
Doge. Why will you torment me, Sir,
With this officious care? These flowers are nought.
Go bring me pungent herbs, hyssop and rue
And rosemary; odours that keep in sense—
I have forgot my handkerchief.
Zeno. Take this.
Doge. I am an old man newly stung with grief—
Thou hast forgiven me, Zeno? Are ye ready?
Where is the accuser?
Eriz. May it please your Highness,
Call forth the prisoner.

Enter Foscari guarded.

Cos. Oh not thou, good Doge;
Spare those white hairs!
Doge. Dare not to pity me!
Sir, those white hairs are lichens on a rock.
I tell ye, Sirs, since yesternight my blood
Is dried up in my veins, my heart is turned
To stone; but I am Doge of Venice still,
And know my office. Fear me not, Francesco!
Francesco Foscari—Sir, is he there?
My eyes are old and dim.
Fos. I am here, father!
Doge! I am here.
Doge. Francesco Foscari,
Thou art arraigned for the foul midnight murder
Of the senator Donato. Art thou innocent?
Or guilty?
Fos. Can'st thou ask? The fresh-born babe
That knows not yet the guiltiness of thought,
Is not from such crime whiter.
Doge. Gracious heaven,
I thank thee! Now the weight is off my soul.

I sinned in my black fear. Where 's the accuser?
Let him stand forth. Cosmo—Signor Donato,
Speak.
Eriz. Look with how calm and proud a mien
The murderer stands, whilst the poor son conceals
His face against the wall.
Doge. Speak, pr'ythee, speak.
Cos. Alas! alas! I cannot. We were friends
Even from earliest childhood. I loved him—
Oh how I loved him! Ay, and he loved me
With a protecting love, the firmest love;
For stronger, bolder, hardier, he to me
Was as an elder brother. And his home
Was mine, and mine was his—Oh he has sate
A hundred times on that dear father's knee,
His little head nestling against that breast,
Where now—Oh Foscari, had'st thou slain me,
My last word had been pardon! But my father,
And with a steadfast and unaltering cheek
To listen——
Fos. Cosmo! I am innocent.
Yet, Heaven knows, I grieve——
Cos. Camilla's father—
Poor, poor Camilla!
Eriz. (*aside.*) Ah thou hast it now!
'T is a fair woman's soft and liquid name
That stings thy soul! Good, good.—Ho! Officer!
[*Apart to an Officer, giving him a paper.*
Deliver that and bring the witness hither,
Look thou take no excuse. [*Exit Officer.*
Doge. Signor Donato,
I pray you check these pardonable tears.
Were this a place for passion, what 's thy grief
Measured with mine? The death of all thy name
To this suspense, this agony, this shame,
That eats away the soul? What is thy grief—
Master thyself, I say. Francesco Foscari
Stands there to answer to thy charge of murder:
Produce thy proofs.
Eriz. Bring in the corse. My Lord,
And ye, the equal judges, spare the son
This miserable duty. I can tell,
For I by chance was there, this tale of blood
And mystery. The late unhappy feud
Is known to all. Returning from St. Mark's
With my young kinsman in his gondola—
For I had missed of mine—we landed close
To the Donato Palace, as the bell
Was tolling midnight. 'T was an awful storm;
But by the flashing lightning we saw one
Leap from the balcony—a cavalier,
Splendid in dress and air. The lightning glared
Full on his face and habit, unconcealed
By hat or cloak, and instantly we knew
Francesco Foscari.
Zeno. Art sure of that?
Cos. Oh sure! Too sure!
Eriz. He passed so close, Count Zeno,
That my cloak brushed his vest; but sprang aside,
As he had met an adder, and leaped down
Into a waiting gondola. I call'd,
But Foscari answered not; and Cosmo spake,
Betwixt a sigh and smile, of fair Camilla,
Of their long loves, and of the morning's ire,
And how he hoped this dark and sudden cloud
Would speedily pass away. Even as he spake,
Whilst loitering on the steps, we heard a shriek
Within the house, so piercing, so prolonged,
So born of bitter anguish—to this hour
That shriek is ringing in mine ears! And when
With trembling hearts and failing limbs, we scaled
The stairs, we saw Donato bathed in blood,
And poor Camilla lying on his breast,
Her arms strained round his neck, as if she tried
To keep in his dear life. [*The corse brought in.*
The bloody witness
Of this foul deed is here.
Fos. Poor good old man!
This is a grievous sight.
Doge. Oh! Would to Heaven
That I so lay, and so—I pray thee, on.
Where are thy proofs?
Eriz. They shall come soon enough.
Donato, rouse thee! Look upon those wounds!
Think on the honoured dead!
Cos. I dare not think,
For thought is frenzy. Lords! The Count Erizzo
Hath told ye how we found the corse. This sword,
The well-known sword of Foscari, was plunged
Deep in his gory breast; beside him lay
This hat and cloak, the splendid soldier's garb
Of Foscari; no man had approached the house
Save only Foscari; and his last word,
Mingled with cries of murder and of help,
Was "Foscari." Is that sword thine? Disown it,
And, against oath and proof and circumstance,
Thy word—thy naked word—Disown that sword,
And give me back the blessed faith that trusts
In man my fellow! Look upon it well.
Fos. 'T is mine.
Cos. He 's guilty. 'T was the last faint hope
On this side Heaven.
Doge. Cosmo! It is not his—
He knows not what he says—Give me the sword.
Fos. 'T is mine; that which lay sheathed in victory
Before ye yesterday; that which I bore
Triumphing through the battle. What a blaze
Streamed from the sparkling steel—how bright, how pure,
How glorious, how like the light of Fame—
A wild and dazzling fire! Both, both are quenched.
The sword is mine; but of this foulest deed
I am as ignorant as the senseless blade.
Zeno. Who heard Donato call on Foscari?
Eriz. Doge, thou hast asked for proofs, for witnesses;
I have one here. Officer, hast thou brought
The lady?
Officer. She attends.
Eriz. Go, lead her in. [*Exit Officer.*
Cos. What lady? Sure thou canst not mean——

Enter Officer leading Camilla.

Fos. Camilla!
Cos. She walks as in a heavy dream; her senses
Are stupified by sorrow. Count Erizzo,
Why didst thou send for her? Why bring her here?

Had we not breaking hearts enow before
Without poor, poor Camilla?
Eriz. She alone
Heard his last dying words. Lady Camilla!
Cos. She neither sees nor hears; she is herself
A moving corse.
Eriz. Camilla! Speak to her.
Cos. Sister! Heaven shield her senses! She is deaf
Even to my voice. Dear sister!
Eriz. Lead her towards
The body. So! she sees it.
Cam. Father! Father!
Have I found thee, dear father? Let me sit
Here at thy feet, and lean my aching head
Against thy knee—Oh how it throbs!—and bury
My face within thy cloak. What ails me, father,
That my heart flutters so? Feel here—He's cold!
He 's dead! He 's dead!
Eriz. Camilla!
Cam. Who art thou?
Where am I? Wherefore have ye dragged me forth
Into the glare of day—Oh cruel! cruel!—
Amongst strange men? Where am I? Foscari! Now
I have a comforter. Have they not told thee
That I am fatherless? Dost weep for me?
For me?
Eriz. Leave him; he is a murderer.
Thy father's murderer!
Cam. Who dared say that?
Francesco, speak to me!
Eriz. Pollute her not!
Touch not her garments! Fly his very sight—
He slew thy father.
Cam. Ha! Again! Again!
Cosmo, this man is false. Is he not, Cosmo?
Is he not all one falsehood? Answer me.
I will kneel to thee, Cosmo, for a word,
A sign. Press but my hand. He lets it fall!
Cos. Sister—I cannot tell her.
Eriz. Thou thyself
Art witness to his crime.
Cam. I never knew
Aught of him but his virtues.
Eriz. Noble lady,
Thou art before the assembled power of Venice,
Before thy father's corse, before high Heaven—
Answer me truly, lady—Didst thou hear
Thy murdered father call on Foscari?
Cam. Ah!—He is innocent.
Eriz. Didst thou not hear
Foscari's name mixed with his dying shriek?
Cam. He 's innocent! Oh I would stake my life
On Foscari's innocence.
Doge. Beloved child!
Cam. Ah! Art thou there? Release him! Set him free!
Thou art the Doge, the mighty Doge of Venice,
Thou hast the power to free him.—Save him now
From my hard kinsman! Save him! I remember,
When I was but a little child, I craved
The grace of a poor galley-slave, and thou
Didst pardon him and set him free as air;—
Wilt thou not save thy son, and such a son,
Who is as clear of this foul sin as thou?
Cosmo, kneel with me!
Cos. I have knelt for justice;
And now again—
Cam. For mercy! mercy!
Eriz. Answer!
Demand her answer, Doge. She is a witness,
Command her by thy power; thou art the Judge.
Doge. I am, I am. Ye should have Dukes of stone,
But this is flesh. Camilla, I am not
A King, who wears fair mercy on the cross
Of his bright diadem; I have no power
Save as the whetted axe to strike and slay,
A will-less instrument of the iron law
Of Venice. Daughter—Thou that should'st have been
My daughter, we are martyrs at the stake,
And must endure. Shall we not copy him,
Who stands there with so brave a constancy,
Patient, unfaltering? Let us choose the right,
And leave the event to Heaven. Speak, my dear child.
Cam. Heaven guide me then! Lords, I am here an orphan,
The orphan of one day.—But yesternight—
Oh! did ye ever see a father die?
Cos. Calm thee, my sister.
Cam. And ye drag me hither—
Ye call me to bear witness—me, a woman;
A wretched helpless woman!—Against him,
Whom—ye are merciless—ye have no touch
Of pity or of manhood! Do your worst;
I will not answer ye.
Fos. Oh woman's love,
Pure nurse of kind and charitable thoughts,
Wiser than wisdom, instinct of the soul,
How do I bless thee, holiest love! Camilla,
My brave and true Camilla, thou hast dropt
Balm in the festering wound. Yet answer them.
I cannot fear the truth. Ask her once more.
Eriz. Were not the last words that Donato spake
Foscari and murder?
Cam. Yes.
Eriz. Take her away;
She hath confessed enough.
Cam. Oh no! no! no!
Foscari is guiltless! Hear me!—He is guiltless!
Doge. Can'st thou prove that? Thy sweet face always brought
A comfort. Prove but that.
Eriz. (*aside.*) All curses on
The coward Celso! He 'll escape me yet.
(*Aloud.*) The facts? The proofs? The witnesses?
Cam. His life;
My heart, my bursting heart. If I had seen
With these poor eyes that horror—had seen him
Stabbing—Oh, thoughts like these may make me mad,
But all the powers of earth and hell can never
Shake my true faith! Foscari! I will share
Thy fate, will die with thee, will be thy bride
Even in that fatal hour, and pass away
With thee to Heaven—So! so!
Fos. She sinks; she sinks;
Her strength is overwrought. Oh die not yet
Till I may die with thee! Awake, revive,

My plighted love! The bridal hour will soon
Unite us, my Camilla. Help! she faints.
Eriz. Fold her not thus within thy arms! Resign her!
Fos. To thee! While still this arm hath marrow in it!
To thee! Cosmo—thou—thou—Be tender of her,
Be very tender—'t is a broken flower—
And pardon her her love. Take her. The pain
Of death is over now. Proceed, my lords.
Zeno. Let me support her, Cosmo. Thou dost stagger
Under her slender form.
Cos. He spake to me,
He gazed on me—I felt the long sad look
Dwell on my face—he, at whose crime my soul
Shudders, he spake—and I—men would have thought
I was the guilty one! He bade me love
This dearest, wretchedest. Tell him—No! no!
Not even a last word.

[*Exeunt Cosmo and Zeno, with Camilla.*

Eriz. This hapless maid
Hath owned enough. Foscari, wilt thou confess
The murder?
Fos. I am innocent.
Eriz. Confess;
Or we must force confession. To the rack!
Doge. Never whilst I have life! Am I not still
The Doge of Venice? Rather stretch these stiff
And withered limbs upon thy engines, Count!
Rather crack these old joints! I thought that I
Was steeled against all strokes—but this—
Eriz. The rack!
Fos. Bethink thee of the Roman fathers, Doge,
Of Brutus and of Manlius; thy son
Will not disgrace thee. Come, the rack, the rack!
I will front pain as a brave enemy,
And rush to the encounter. What is the sense
Of bodily agony to that which I
Endure even now? Disgrace, suspicion, scorn,
Hatred and haughty pity, and that last
Worst pang—her love, her misery. These are tortures!
Let me have something that a warrior's soul
May strive against and conquer. Come, the rack!
Doge. Never.
Eriz. I must not hear thee, Doge. The question!

Re-enter Cosmo, and Zeno.

Cos. Stop, on your lives! Forbear this cruelty!
This cowardly cruelty! He will endure—
He will call up the courage of the field,
And die before he groans. His eye surveys
That engine steadily, whose very sight
Makes my flesh creep. Remove it. Oh to see
That butchery—and the old man—the poor old man!
Remove it.
Eriz. Well. Proceed we then to sentence.
Zeno. First listen to the prisoner. Foscari! speak.
Sen. Yes; let us hear his tale. Defend thyself.
Fos. To ye who doubt! To ye who disbelieve!
Sir, there are spirits that can never stoop
To falsehood; nor for wealth, or power, or fame,
Or life, or dearer love. Oh, were ye cast
In the old chivalrous mould, pure diamond souls
On which the dim polluting touch of doubt
Rests not a breathing time! Were ye built up
Of honour—But to ye—Why should I speak
When I have nothing but my knightly word
To prove me innocent?
Eriz. You are well paid
By this contempt, Count Zeno. Now to judgment.

[*The Doge, Zeno, Erizzo, and the Senators retire to the back of the stage, leaving Cosmo and Foscari in the front.*

Fos. Father! He passes on and doth not speak;
He cannot; he has no words, nothing but tears.
Oh, what must the grief be that forces tears
From his proud heart—his proud and bursting heart!
The flame of youth burnt in him yesterday
At fourscore years; to-day hath made him old.
What groan was that? What other wretch? Donato!
Cosmo! Wilt thou not answer?
Cos. Oh that voice
Which was such perfect music,—which seemed made
For truth and thought, fit organ, how it jars
My very soul! What wouldst thou?
Fos. I would thank thee
That thou hast spared one pang to a brave heart.
That rack——To have seen me stretched there, to direct
Each fresh progressive torture—He had died
Before our eyes! I thank thee, Sir. No more.
Unless a dying man, for I am sentenced—
Look how he sinks his head upon his clenched
And withered hands! I am condemned, and we
Shall meet no more. Thou wilt not join the headsman
To see the axe fall on my neck, nor follow
The shouting multitude, who yesterday
Hail'd me a god, and, with like shouts, to-morrow
Will drag me to the block. We meet no more;
And as a dying man I fain would part
In charity. We were friends, Cosmo.—
Cos. Friends!
I sinned in listening; but whilst he spake,
A world of kindly thoughts, a gush of the deep
Old passionate love came o'er my heart—Forgive me,
Oh blessed shade! Friends! Why thy crime were common
Wanting that damning dye—a simple murder!
What though of one kind, noble, generous,
Whose princely spirit scattered happiness
As the sun light—a single sin! But 't was
My father, mine—avenging angel, hear!—
Mine, that so loved thee.——
Fos. That, at the first glance
Of wild suspicion, the first crafty word
Of treacherous hate, doubted, accused, condemned—
Chasing through shameful trial to shameful death—
Yet daring to call down the wrath of God
On a false friend! Oh cunning self-deceit!
Oh wondrous cheat of blind mortality!
Thus doth the Evil Spirit cast about
To win a soul from heaven. They come. They come.
Now gentle death.

[*The Doge, Erizzo, Zeno, and Senators advance.*

Speak! I can better bear
Thy words than that long gaze of agony.
I am prepared.

Doge. Oh why did I resume
This bonnet, which thy filial hand had plucked
From my old brow, this fatal coronet,
Predoomed to fall, that scorches me like fire—
Stings me like twisted serpents! Would I were
A naked slave, chained to his weary oar,
A worm that hath no sense but sufferance,
Any thing vilest and most miserable,
Rather than Doge of Venice! I must plunge
A dagger in thy breast. Francesco Foscari,
The council doth pronounce thee guilty.

Fos. Ha!

Eriz. It works. It works.

Doge. Thou saidst thou wast prepared.

Fos. Ay—but the word! The first sound of the word!

Doge. The council doth condemn—

Fos. All, father? All?

Doge. No; there were two—Count Zeno could not join
Guilty and Foscari; and I——my son,
Thou could'st not do this deed!

Fos. Thank heaven! Thank heaven!

Eriz. The sentence, Doge!

Fos. Yes, father. The one pang,
The worse than death,—the infamy is past.
The dagger's in my breast; now drive it home,
And with a merciful speed.

Eriz. Sir, thou wilt find
Justice hath bowed to mercy.

Cos. Doge, the sentence!

Doge. The penalty is death. But for thy rank,
Thy services and mine, it is exchanged
For banishment to Candia. Thou must live
In Candia, an exile, till thy days
Be ended, my dear son.

Fos. Live! Give me death!
Ye that give infamy, and dare to talk
Of mercy, give me death, painfullest death
And I will thank ye,—bless ye! Give me death!
Ye cannot give me life. Sooner the bay,
That wreathes the warrior's brows, shall spread and flourish
In a dark mine, shut up from sun and air,
Than I can live without a proud respect,
A white unblemish'd name, the light and breath
Of honour. Death, I say!—a murderer's death!
Ye dare not change the laws.

Cos. Live, and repent.

Fos. Cosmo, if e'er you loved me, call on them
For justice—bloody justice! Doge of Venice,
Maintain the insulted laws! Send me to death,—
To instant death! Oh father, free thy son
From this dread load of misery! Wouldst thou see
Thy only child shunned as a leper, father?
Sent out into the world a second Cain?
Oh give me death! death! death!

Doge. I knew that life
Would be a lingering agony; and yet
To kill thee—my dear son! Oh prophecy
Accurst, I feel thee now!

Eriz. Remove the prisoner.
What! doth he struggle?

Doge. Touch him not, vile slaves!

Fos. A moment pause, and ye may lead me hence
Tame as a fondled kid. Ye Senators,
Ye kings of Venice, I appeal from you
To the Supreme Tribunal.

Eriz. To thy father?

Fos. To Him that is in heaven. Ye are men,
Frail, erring, ignorant men, guided or driven
By every warring passion: some by love
Of the beloved Donati; some by hate
Of the high Foscari; by envy some;
Many by fear; and one by low ambition.
This ye call justice, lords! But I appeal
To the All-righteous Judge of earth and heaven,
Before whose throne condemners and condemned
All shall stand equal, at whose feet I swear,
By what my soul holds sacred—by the spurs
Of knighthood—by the Christian's holier Cross,
And by that old man's white and reverend locks,
That I am innocent. Ye, who disbelieve,
And ye who doubt, and ye, the grovelling few,
Believing who condemn, I shower on all
Contempt and pardon. Now, guards, to the prison.

Zeno. Look to the Doge.

Fos. Zeno, when I am gone,
Thou wilt be kind to him?

Zeno. Even as a son!
Even as thyself.

Fos. Thou truest friend, farewell!

Zeno. Look to the Doge.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Donato Palace.

Cosmo and Erizzo.

Cos. Gone to the prison! No! my lord Erizzo.
I know Camilla.

Eriz. Well—I might mistake.

Cos. Straight from her father's bier, where all night long
She watch'd and wept, to seek—Go to, thou'rt wrong!
Thou 'rt wrong.

Eriz. Think no more of it. Doth the Senate
Meet to-day?

Cos. Was she veil'd?

Eriz. Who?

Cos. Whom thou saw'st.
She—not my sister!—Was she veil'd?

Eriz. She was.

Cos. How couldst thou know her?

Eriz. By the pliant grace
Of the young form—the goddess step—the charm
Of motion. With such port the queenly swan
Glides o'er the waters. Dost thou not remember
When Foscari once——

Cos. Avoid that name. Avoid it.

Eriz. She 's here.

Enter Camilla.

Cos. And veil'd! Whence com'st thou, sister? speak!
Why hast thou borne those tears and that wan face
Abroad amongst the happy? Whence com'st thou?
Cam. From one whose heart drops blood for this great grief.
Cos. Whence?
Cam. From St. Mark's.
Cos. The Doge! The poor old Doge!
Eriz. The Doge! It was not by the Ducal chambers
That I this morning saw—
Cam. My lord Erizzo,
I seek not to deceive ye. I have seen
The Doge. But 't was another wretcheder
Of whom I spake,—one who hath long to live.
I come from where beneath the leaden roofs
Foscari lies.
Cos. And she can speak that name
Sighingly, fondly! She can cast aside
Even maiden modesty! Forgive me, friend,
That trusting her I doubted thee. Approach not!
Thou art contaminate.
Cam. He 's innocent!
Turn not away, shake me not off, as though
I were some loathed reptile. Cosmo! Brother!
We two are left alone in the wide world,
And I that sate upon that rainbow throne
Of happiness, I am fallen, fallen.
Cos. What would'st thou?
How may I comfort thee? Sweet gentle soul,
Her tears are daggers. Speak.
Cam. And thou wilt listen?
Cos. Patient as infancy.
Cam. He goes to-night;
And I——nay, start not.
Cos. What of thee?
Cam. And I—
We were betroth'd; he goes a sentenced wretch—
But innocent, most innocent! He goes
To scorn, to exile, and to misery,
And I—I came to say farewell to thee,
My brother—I go with him.
Cos. Ha!
Eriz. She raves.
Look how she trembles; she is overwatched;
This is a frenzy.
Cam. Sir, I am not mad;
I'm a Donato born, and drank in courage
Even with my mother's milk. What if I shake!
Within this trembling frame there is a heart
As firm as thine. Speak to me ere we part,
My brother! Speak to me, whatever words,
However bitter! Any thing but silence,
Cold withering silence!
Cos. Sister!
Cam. Bless thee, bless thee,
For that kind word!
Cos. My sister, sit thee down—
Misery hath brought her to this pass.—Camilla,
We had a father once:—he 's slain. Wouldst thou
Join this white hand, which he so loved to mould
Within his own, the soft and dimpled hand,
With one—
Cam. Oh pure as thine! Believe it, Cosmo;
Pure as thine own!
Cos. We have no father now,
And we should love each other. Stay with me.
I am no tyrant-brother: I 'll not force
Thy blooming beauty to some old man's bed
For high alliance; I'll not plunge thy youth
Into that living tomb where the cold nun
Chants daily requiems, that thy dower may swell
My coffers; I but ask of thee to stay
With me in thy dear Venice, thy dear home,
Thy mistress, mine. I'll be to thee, Camilla,
A father, brother, lover. Stay with me.
I will be very kind to thee.
Cam. Oh cruel!
This kindness is the rack.
Cos. I would but save thee
From exile, penury, shame—
Cam. He said so.
Cos. He!
Cam. Ay, he urg'd all that thou canst say against
Himself and me in vain. My heart is firm.
I go. But love me still, oh love me still,
My brother!
Cos. Listen.
Cam. He said all.
Cos. Camilla!
I'd save thee from a crime, a damning crime—
Did he say that? From such a parricide,
Such unimagined sin—I tell thee, girl,
The Roman harlot, she the infamous
That crush'd her father with her chariot-wheels,
She'll be forgotten in thy monstrous guilt,
Whitened by thy black shame.
Cam. Oh father, father,
I call upon thee! Look on me from heaven,
Search my whole soul—'t is white. Oh when some tale
Of woman's truth brought tears into my eyes,
How often hath he said—Be thou, too, faithful
In weal or woe! And now—farewell! farewell!
Cosmo, my heart is breaking———Say farewell,
Only farewell!
Cos. Stay with me.
Cam. No.
Cos. Then go,
Outcast of earth and heaven, of God and man!
Abandon'd, spurn'd, abhorr'd, accurst! Go forth
A murderer's bride—worse! worse! What impious priest
Will dare profane the holy words that join
The pure of heart and hand for ye, for ye,
The parricides——Oh that she had but died
Innocent in her childhood!
Cam. One day, brother,
Thou 'lt grieve for this. Now bless thee!
[*Exit Camilla.*
Cos. Stay!
Eriz. She's gone.
Cos. Why let her go, foul stain upon our house!
She was his daughter still, and yesterday
An angel! And he loved her and she him

With such a dotage! 'Twas a sight to see
How ere the pretty babe could speak its will,
The chubby hands would cling and fix themselves
Round its dear father's neck. Mother, or nurse,
Or I, the elder child that played with her
Full half the day, were nothing if she caught
One glimpse of that dear father.
Eriz. Now she'll hang
Around his murderer's neck.
Cos. Do ye all forget
That I'm her brother? Ho, Camilla?
Eriz. 'Twill be
A triumph 'mid their shame to these misproud
Revengeful Foscari to bear off thus
The glory of your house.
Cos. I'll rescue her.
Where is she? Is she gone? What ho, Camilla!
I'll follow her to the end of the earth. The laws
Give me a father's power. I'll save her yet.
Camilla! Ho, Camilla!
Eriz. You must seek her
With him. The time draws near. [*Cosmo rushes out.*
Now, Foscari,
I have thee at my feet. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

The Sea Shore.

Doge, Foscari, Guards.

Fos. Here then we part. Those Guards — send them away,
Let them not listen to the last faint word,
Nor gaze on the last lingering look. Why doubt'st thou?
Fear me not—I 'll be a true prisoner.
I am a Foscari still, bound by one chain,
Honour. Send them away.
Doge. Leave us. [*Exeunt Guards.*
Fos. Ay, now
My soul is free again. That tallest slave
Stood brushing against my vest—he with the hard
Cold stony eyes—and I—let not that man
Go with me.
Doge. He shall not.
Fos. How can I waste
A word on such a reptile! I'd a world
Of sad and loving things to say to thee,
But there's a weight just here—Oh father! father!
I thought to have been a comfort to thy age,
But I was born to spread a desolation
On all I love.
Doge. I would not change my son,
Banish'd although he be, with the proudest sire
In Christendom. But we must part. These men
Are merciless.
Fos. Implore no grace of them.
And yet to leave this brave and tender heart
To wither in its princely solitude,
Friendless, companionless.
Doge. Age hath one friend,
One sure friend—Death.
Fos. Oh I shall not be by
To close thine eyes or kneel beside thy couch,
Or gather from thy lips the last fond sound
Of blessing or of pardon. Bless me now,
Parting is dying.
Doge. Bless thee, my dear son.

Enter Camilla.

Camilla!
Fos. Bless her too. She is thy daughter;
She goes with me to exile.
Doge. She is blest
In her high constancy. Beloved child,
Thy virtuous love hath softened the sharp pang
Of this dread hour.
Cam. Father! My only father!
Foscari, the bark awaits us.
Fos. What, already?
Cam. All is prepared.
Doge. I should have told thee so;
But when I would have said, Go! go! my tongue
Clave to my mouth.
Fos. Already! Write to me
Often. Is that forbidden? Yet the Doge
May ask my Candiote jailer if his prisoner
Be strictly kept. Then I shall sometimes see,
For surely he will show it me, thy name,
Thy writing, something thou hast touched. 'Twill be
A comfort.
Doge. I will write to thee.
Fos. And think
Of me when the pale moon lets fall her cold
And patient light upon the Adrian wave
That sighs and trembles. Think of me then.
Doge. Always.
By sun, or moon, or star; in the bright day,
In the night's darkness, but one single thought
Will dwell in my old heart—My banished son.
Cam. Alas! Francesco, why wilt thou prolong
This useless agony?
Fos. He hath not said
Farewell. One last embrace, one blessing more—
The last!
Cam. What step is that?

Enter Zeno.

Zeno. I crave your pardon:
But I must pray the Doge to come with me
Straight to the Senate. 'T is an earnest business.
I do beseech your Highness. Leave him, Foscari!
Cling not together as your very souls
Were interlaced. The Senate, Doge, demands thee.
Fos. The Senate! What! hath he another son
To try, to torture, to condemn? Hath he
Another heart to break? Yet go. For once
Their cruelty is mercy. Go.
Doge. Whilst still
These eyes may gaze on thee! Ere yonder cloud
Shall pass across the sun, a darker cloud
Will wrap me in its blackness; then the throne,
The judgment seat, the grave—no matter where
The old man rests his bones!—One dim eclipse
Will shadow all—but now—say to the senate
That at their bidding I am sending forth
My son to exile.
Fos. Go! go!
Zeno. Doge, thy duty,
Thy princely duty calls thee.

Doge. To that word,
Which was to me a god, have I not offered
My child upon the altar? Is the sacrifice
Still incomplete? Farewell! farewell!
Zeno. Francesco,
Embark not till ye hear from me.—My lord,
This way.
Doge. I pray you pardon me—I 'm old—
I 'm very old. [*Exeunt Doge and Zeno.*
Cam. Nay, sit not shivering there
Upon the ground. Hast thou no word for me,
Francesco?
Fos. Is he gone? Quite gone? For ever?
Cam. Take comfort.
Fos. Is he gone? I did not say
Farewell, nor God be with thee! When men part
From common friends for a slight summer voyage,
They cry Heaven speed thee! and I could not say
Farewell to my dear father, nor call down
One benison on that white reverend head
Which I shall never see again. There breathes not
A wretch so curst as I.
Cam. Foscari, the lips
That I have kissed are cold.
Fos. Oh bruised flower,
Whose very wounds do shed an odorous balm!
My gentle comforter! could I forget
Thy misery! Forgive me.
Cam. I have left
His bier, his bloody bier.
Fos. Ay, there it is!
Fortune, and friends, and home, to fly from them
Were nothing—but she leaves the unburied corse
Of her dead father, the dear privilege
To sit and watch till the last hour, to strew
His body with sweet flowers like a bank in spring,
Making death beautiful, to follow him
To his cold bed, and drop slow heavy tears
To the bell's knolling. She leaves grief to go
With me, whom the world calls—Oh matchless love,
Life could not pay thee! Matchless, matchless love!
Cam. He, that blest spirit, knows thy innocence:
And I—I never doubted.
Fos. Matchless love!
We 'll never part, we 'll live and die together.
There is a comfort in the word. Camilla,
Where are the guards, the ship? My heart beats high
At thy exceeding truth. We shall set forth
As to a victory.

Enter Cosmo and Erizzo.

Cos. She 's here! She 's here!
Move not a step. Dare not to stir. Camilla,
Follow me.
Fos. Who is he that dares obstruct
The mandate of the Senate? I'm an exile
Travelling to banishment. All Venice knows
The piteous story of the Doge's son
Condemned by his own father, and of her
His true and faithful love. Now leave us, Sir;
Let us depart in peace.
Cos. Murderer! Ravisher!
I seek my sister.
Fos. She stands there. Ask her
Whom she will follow.
Cam. He knows well. Francesco,
The whole world shall not part us.
Fos. Mine! Mine own!
My very own! I've lost wealth, country, home,
Fame, friends, and father; I have nothing left
Save thee, my dear one; but with thee I'm rich,
And great, and happy. Now let us go forth
Into our banishment. Give me thy hand,
My wife.
Cos. Camilla, I command thee stay—
The laws of Venice give to me a power
Absolute as a father's. Loose her, Sir.
Let go her hand. I warn ye part. They'll drive me
Into a madness. If thou be a man
Let's end this quarrel bravely.
Cam. Heed him not!
Fos. Calm thee! He is thy brother.
Cos. I disclaim her.
Fos. Tremble not so! I am unarmed, Camilla.
Cos. Dost hold her as a shield before thy breast?
Dost palter with me, coward?
Fos. (*breaking from Camilla.*) Off!—A sword!
A sword for charity!
Cam. Help! Help! The Doge!
The guard! Stay with them! Part them! Leave them not!
Hold them asunder, Count, and in my prayers
Thou shalt be sainted! Help. [*Camilla rushes out.*
Fos. Give me a sword!
Cos. Ay his or mine. I am so strongly armed
In my most righteous cause, I would encounter
A mailed warrior with a willow wand.
Eriz. There is my weapon.
Fos. Why thou wast my foe!
But this is such a bounty as might shame
The princely hand of friendship. Not the blade
Girt by a crowned Duke around my loins,
An Emperor's gift, the day I won my spurs
In the Suabian victory, not that knightly sword
Was welcomer than this.
Cos. Foscari, come on!
Fos. I would thou wert a soldier!
Cos. Now.
[*They fight, and Foscari falls.*
Eriz. The fates
Work for me.—Ha!
Cos. Erizzo.
Eriz. Is he dead?
Cos. Alas! alas! Lift up his head.
Cam. (*behind the scene.*) Here! Here!
Canst thou not hasten?

Enter Camilla and the Doge.

(*entering*) Foscari! He's slain!
Oh bloody, bloody brother! Kill me too!
Be merciful! Help!
Cos. Doth he live?
Cam. Away!
Thy hands are bloody!—Help, Doge Foscari!
Help, father!—The old man stands stiffening there
Into a statue—He 'll die first! Off! Off!

Wouldst kill him o'er again?—He bleeds to death!
Father, it is thy blood.
Doge. My son! My son!
Who hath done this?
Cam. He is not dead. Support him.
See how his eye-lids quiver. Foscari!
'T is I, thy wife!
Fos. Mine own!
Cos. Thanks, gracious heaven!

Enter Zeno and Guards.

Zeno. Seize Count Erizzo, Guard. Have ye not heard—
What spectacle is this?—Know ye not, Sirs,
That Foscari is guiltless, that the murderer
Is found?
Fos. Hear that! I'm innocent! Hear that!
The murderer is found! Nay, hold me not—
I'm well—I'm strong. Father, there is no stain
In the long line of Foscari! Camilla,
My faithfullest—
Doge. He falls.
Cam. There wanted this
To crown the brimming cup of my despair.
We should have been the happiest two, Francesco,
Since the first pair in Paradise—but he
That was my brother—
Cos. Peace. Who slew Donato?
Zeno. Celso, bribed by Erizzo to destroy
Francesco Foscari, by Donato crossed
Slew him, and aided by the sword and cloak
Dropped by Francesco, cast this deed of horror
On the most innocent.
Cos. Hath he confessed?
Zeno. All. Seize Erizzo, bind him.
Eriz. There 's no need.
The work is done, well done—Signor Donato,
I thank thee still for that—and such revenge
Is cheaply bought with life.
Cos. Oh, damned viper!
Eriz. Ay! Do ye know me? Not a man of ye
But is my tool or victim. I'm your master.
This was my aim when old Donato died,
And but that Celso dared not cope with Foscari,
And sought to catch him in a subtler springe,
I had been now your Doge. And I am more.
I am your master, Sirs. Look where he lies
The towering Foscari, who yesterday
Stood statelier than the marble gods of Rome
In their proud beauty. Hearken! It is mute,
The tongue which darted words of fiery scorn,
And cold contempt, and bitter pardon—dared
To hurl on me fierce pardon! Ha! he shivers!
His stout limbs writhe! The insect that is born
And dies within an hour would not change lives
With Foscari. I am content. For thee
I have a tenfold curse. Long be thy reign,
Great Doge of Venice!
Doge. Ay, I am the Doge;
Lead him to instant death. [*Exit Erizzo guarded.*
My son!
Cos. 'T is I
That am the only murderer of the earth—
I that slew him. Bring racks and axes—
Doge. Live!
I pardon thee. He pardons thee. Live, Cosmo;
It is thy Prince's last behest. I've been
O'erlong a crowned slave. Go! dross to dross.
[*Flinging off the Ducal bonnet.*
And bruise the stones of Venice! Tell the senate
There lies their diadem. Now I am free!
Now I may grieve and pity like a man!
May weep, and groan, and die! My heart may burst
Now! Start not, Zeno—Didst thou never hear
Of a broken heart? Look there.
Zeno. Hush! He revives.
Cam. My Foscari!
Fos. Camilla! Is't Camilla?
Is she not weeping? What! canst thou weep now,
When honour is redeemed and a bright name?
Why there should be no tear in all the world;
Gladness is come from Heaven.
Cam. Death! Death!
Fos. This joy
Is life. Who talked of death? I cannot die
In such a happiness. I'm well.
Zeno. He sinks;
Support him.
Cos. Is he dead?
Doge. Beloved son,
How art thou?
Fos. Strong at heart. What are those shapes
That hover round us? There! There! There!
Doge. Thy friends.
Fos. Friends! Have they heard that I am innocent?
That I'm no murderer? That I do not shame
My father's glory? Let it be proclaimed—
Tell Venice—tell— [*dies.*
Zeno. He 's gone.
Cam. Mine! Still mine own!
Bury me with him! He is mine.

JULIAN, A TRAGEDY.

TO

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREDY, Esq.

WITH HIGH ESTEEM FOR THOSE
ENDOWMENTS WHICH HAVE CAST NEW LUSTRE ON
HIS ART;

WITH WARM ADMIRATION FOR THOSE POWERS
WHICH HAVE INSPIRED,
AND THAT TASTE WHICH HAS FOSTERED, THE TRAGIC
DRAMATISTS OF HIS AGE;

WITH HEARTFELT GRATITUDE FOR THE ZEAL
WITH WHICH HE BEFRIENDED THE
PRODUCTION OF A STRANGER, FOR THE
JUDICIOUS ALTERATIONS WHICH HE SUGGESTED,
AND FOR
THE ENERGY, THE PATHOS, AND THE SKILL
WITH WHICH HE
MORE THAN EMBODIED ITS PRINCIPAL CHARACTER;

This Tragedy

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

The Story and Characters of the following Tragedy are altogether fictitious. Annabel's cautions to silence in the first Scene, and the short dialogue between her and Julian, after he awakens, will be recognised by the classical reader as borrowed from the fine opening of the Orestes of Euripides; the incident of uncovering the body in the last Act is also taken from the Electra of Sophocles. Of any other intentional imitation, the Author is unconscious.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Alfonso, *King of Sicily, a boy, disguised as Theodore.*
The Duke *of* Melfi, *Uncle to Alfonso, and Regent of the Kingdom.*
Julian, *Melfi's Son.*
Count D'Alba, *a powerful Nobleman.*
Valore, Leanti, Calvi, *Sicilian Nobles.*
Paolo, *Julian's Servant.*
Bertone, *Servant to Count D'Alba.*
Renzi, *an old Huntsman.*
An Archbishop.

Annabel, *Julian's Wife.*

Nobles, Prelates, Officers, Guards, Murderers, &c.

The Scene is in and near Messina; the time of action two days.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY A FRIEND.

They who in Prologues for your favours ask,
Find every season more perplex their task;
Though doubts and hopes and tremblings do not fail,
The points fall flatly and the rhymes grow stale;
Why should the Author hint their fitting parts,
In all the pomp of Verse, to "British hearts?"
Why to such minds as yours with ardour pray,
For more than justice to a first essay?
What need to show how absolute your power?
What stake awaits the issue of the hour—
How hangs the scale 'twixt agony and joy,
What bliss you nourish, or what hopes destroy?—
All these you feel;—and yet we scarce can bring
A Prologue to "the posey of a ring."
To what *may* we allude?—Our plot untold
Is no great chapter from the times of old;
On no august association rests,
But seeks its earliest home in kindly breasts,—
Its scene, as inauspicious to our strain,
Is neither mournful Greece, nor kindling Spain,
But Sicily—where no defiance hurled
At freedom's foes may awe the attending world.
But since old forms forbid us to submit
A Play without a Prologue to the Pit;
Lest this be missed by some true friend of plays,
Like the dull colleague of his earlier days;
Thus let me own how fearlessly we trust
That you will yet be mercifully just.

JULIAN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Royal Palace. Julian sleeping on a couch. Annabel.

Ann. No; still he sleeps! 'T was but the myrtle bud
Tapping against the casement, as the wind

Stirred in the leafy branches. Well he loved
That pleasant birdlike sound, which, as a voice,
Summon'd us forth into the fresher air
Of eve or early morn. Ah! when again——
And yet this sleep is hopeful. For seven nights
He had not tasted slumber. Who comes here?

Enter Alfonso as Theodore.

The gentle page! Alas, to wake him now!
Hush, Theodore! Tread softly—softlier, boy!
Alf. Doth he still sleep?
Ann. Speak lower.
Alf. Doth he sleep?
Ann. Avoid the couch; come this way; close to me.
He sleeps. He hath not moved in all the hours
That thou hast been away.
Alf. Then we may hope;
Dear lady, we may hope.
Ann. Alas! Alas!
See how he lies, scarce breathing. Whilst I hung
Over his couch I should have thought him dead,
But for his short and frequent sighs.
Alf. Ah me!
Not even in slumber can he lose the sense
Of that deep misery; and I——he wakes!
Dost thou not see the quivering mantle heave
With sudden motion?
Ann. Thou hast wakened him.
Thy clamorous grief hath roused him. Hence! Begone!
Leave me!
Alf. And yet his eyes are closed. He sleeps.
He did not move his hand.
Ann. How changed he is!
How pale! How wasted! Can one little week
Of pain and sickness so have faded thee,
My princely Julian! But eight days ago
There lived not in this gladsome Sicily
So glad a spirit. Voice and step and eye
All were one happiness; till that dread hour,
When drest in sparkling smiles, radiant and glowing
With tender thoughts, he flew to meet the King
And his great father. He went forth alone;
Frenzy and grief came back with him.
Alf. And I,
Another grief.
Ann. Thou wast a comforter.
All stranger as thou art, hast thou not shared
My watch as carefully, as faithfully
As I had been thy sister! Ay, and he,
If ever in this wild mysterious woe
One sight or sound hath cheered him, it hath been
A glance, a word of thine.
Alf. He knows me not.
Ann. He knows not me.
Alf. I never heard before
That 't was to meet the King yon fatal night—
Knowingly, purposely—How could he guess
That they should meet? What moved him to that thought?
Ann. Stranger although thou be, thou can'st but know
Prince Julian's father is the Regent here,
And rules for his young kinsman, King Alfonso!
Alf. Ay—Poor Alfonso!
Ann. Wherefore pity him?
Alf. I know not—but I am an orphan too!
I interrupt thee, lady.
Ann. Yet in truth
A gentle pity lingers round the name
Of King Alfonso, orphaned as thou say'st,
And drooping into sickness when he lost
His father, ever since the mournful boy
Hath dwelt in the Villa d'Oro.
Alf. Hast thou seen him?
Ann. The King? No. I'm of Naples. When Prince Julian
First brought me here a bride, his royal cousin
Was fixed beside his father's dying bed.
I never saw him: yet I know him well;
For I have sate and listen'd, hour by hour,
To hear my husband talk of the fair Prince,
And his excelling virtues.
Alf. Did he?—Ah!—
But 't was his wont, talking of those he loved,
To gild them with the rich and burnish'd glow
Of his own brightness, as the evening sun
Decks all the clouds in glory.
Ann. Very dear
Was that young boy to Julian. 'T was a friendship
Fonder than common, blended with a kind
Protecting tenderness, such as a brother
Might fitly show unto the younger born.
Alf. Oh, he hath proved it!
Ann. Thou dost know them both?
Alf. I do. Say on, dear lady.
Ann. Three weeks since
The Duke of Melfi went to bring his ward
Here to Messina——
Alf. To be crowned. They came not.
But wherefore went Prince Julian forth to meet them?
Ann. Father nor cousin came; nor messenger,
From Regent or from King; and Julian chafed
And fretted at delay. At length a peasant,
No liveried groom; a slow foot-pacing serf,
Brought tidings that the royal two that morn
Left Villa d'Oro. Glowing from the chase
Prince Julian stood; his bridle in his hand,
New lighted, soothing now his prancing steed,
And prattling now to me;—for I was still
So foolish fond to fly into the porch
To meet him, when I heard the quick sharp tread
Of that bright Arab, whose proud step I knew
Even as his master's voice. He heard the tale
And instant sprang again into his seat,
Wheeled round, and darted off at such a pace
As the fleet greyhound, at her speed, could scarce
Have matched. He spake no word; but as he passed,
Just glanced back at me with his dancing eyes,
And such a smile of joy, and such a wave
Of his plumed bonnet! His return thou know'st.
Alf. I was its wretched partner.
Ann. He on foot,
Thou on the o'er-travelled horse, slow, yet all stain'd
With sweat, and panting as if fresh escaped
From hot pursuit; and how he called for wine
For his poor Theodore, his faithful page;
Then sate him down and shook with the cold fit

Of aguish fever, till the strong couch rocked
Like a child's cradle. There he sate and sighed;
And then the frenzy came. Theodore!
Alf. Lady!
Ann. He utters nought but madness;—yet sometimes,
Athwart his ravings, I have thought—have feared—
Theodore, thou must know the cause?
Alf. Too well.
Ann. Oh tell me—
Alf. Hush! He wakes.
[*Alfonso retires behind the couch out of Julian's sight.*
Ann. Julian! Dear Julian!
Jul. Sure I have slept a long, long while! Where am I?
How came I hither? Whose kind hand is this?
My Annabel!
Ann. Oh what a happiness
To see thee gently wake from gentle sleep!
Art thou not better? Shall I raise thee up?
Jul. Ay, dearest. Have I then been ill? I'm weak.
I trouble thee, my sweet one.
Ann. 'T is a joy
To minister unto thee.
Jul. Wipe my brow.
And part these locks that the fresh air may cool
My forehead; feel; it burns.
Ann. Alas! how wild
This long neglect hath made thy glossy curls,
How tangled!
Jul. I am faint. Pray lay me down.
Surely the day is stifling.
Ann. There. Good boy,
Throw wide the casement. Doth not the soft breeze
Revive thee?
Jul. Yes. I 'm better. I will rise.
Raise me again;—more upright;—So! Dear wife,
A sick man is as wayward as a child;
Forgive me. Have I been long ill?
Ann. A week.
Jul. I have no memory of aught. 'T is just
Like waking from a dream; a horrible
Confusion of strange miseries; crime and blood
And all I love——Great heaven how clear it seems!
How like a truth! I thought that I rode forth
On my white Barbary horse——Say, did I ride
Alone that day?
Ann. Yes.
Jul. Did I? Could I? No.
Thou dost mistake. I did not. Yet 't is strange
How plain that horror lives within my brain
As what hath been.
Ann. Forget it.
Jul. Annabel,
I thought I was upon that gallant steed
At his full pace. Like clouds before the wind
We flew, as easily as the strong bird
That soars nearest the sun; till in a pass
Between the mountains, screams and cries of help
Rang in mine ears, and I beheld——Oh God!
It was not—Could not—No. I have been sick
Of a sharp fever, and delirium shows,
And to the bodily sense makes palpable,
Unreal forms, objects of sight and sound
Which have no being save in the burning brain
Of the poor sufferer. Why should it shake me!
Ann. Julian!
Could'st thou walk to the window and quaff down
The fragrant breeze, it would revive thee more
Than food or sleep. Forget these evil dreams.
Canst thou not walk?
Jul. I 'll try.
Ann. Lean upon me
And Theodore. Approach, dear boy, support him.
Jul. (*seeing Alfonso.*) Ha! Art thou here? Thou!
I am blinded, dazzled!
Is this a vision, this fair shape that seems
A living child? Do I dream now?
Ann. He is
Young Theodore. The page, who that sad night
Returned—
Jul. Then all is real. Lay me down
That I may die.
Ann. Nay, Julian, raise thy head.
Speak to me, dearest Julian.
Jul. Pray for me
That I may die.
Alf. Alas! I feared too surely
That when he saw me—
Ann. Julian! This is grief,
Not sickness. Julian!
Alf. Rouse him not, dear lady!
See how his hands are clenched. Waken him not
To frenzy. Oh that I alone could bear
This weight of misery.
Ann. He knows the cause,
And I—It is my right, my privilege
To share thy woes, to soothe them. I 'll weep with thee,
And that will be a comfort. Didst thou think
Thou could'st be dearer to me than before
When thou wast well and happy? But thou art
Now. Tell me this secret. I 'll be faithful.
I 'll never breathe a word. Oh spare my heart
This agony of doubt! What was the horror
That maddened thee?
Jul. Within the rifted rocks
Of high Albano, rotting in a glen
Dark, dark at very noon, a father li
Murdered by his own son.
Ann. And thou didst see
The deed? An awful sight to one so good!
Yet—
Jul. Birds obscene, and wolf, and ravening fox,
Ere this—only the dark hairs on the ground
And the brown crusted blood! And she can ask
Why I am mad!
Ann. Oh a thrice awful sight
To one so duteous! Holy priests shall lave
With blessed water that foul spot, and thou
Pious and pitying, thou shalt—
Jul. Hear at once,
Innocent Torturer, that drop by drop
Pour'st molten lead into my wounds—that glen—
Hang not upon me!—In that darksome glen
My father lies. I am a murderer,
A parricide, accurst of God and man.

Let go my hand! purest and whitest saint,
Let go!
Ann. This is a madness. Even now
The fever shakes him.
Jul. Why, the mad are happy!
Annabel, this is a soul-slaying truth.
There stands a witness.
Alf. Julian knew him not.
It was to save a life, a worthless life.
Oh that I had but died beneath the sword
That seemed so terrible! That I had ne'er
Been born to grieve thee, Julian! Pardon me,
Dear lady, pardon me!
Ann. Oh, gentle boy,
How shall we soothe this grief?
Alf. Alas! alas!
Why did he rescue me! I 'm a poor orphan;
None would have wept for me; I had no friend
In all the world save one. I had been reared
In simpleness; a quiet grave had been
A fitter home for me than the rude world;
A mossy heap, no stone, no epitaph,
Save the brief words of grief and praise (for Grief
Is still a Praiser) he perchance had spoke
When they first told him the poor boy was dead.
Shame on me that I shunned the sword!
Jul. By Heaven,
It could not be a crime to save thee! kneel
Before him, Annabel. He is the King.
Ann. Alfonso?
Alf. Ay, so please you, fairest Cousin,
But still your servant. Do not hate me, Lady,
Though I have caused this misery. We have shared
One care, one fear, one hope, have watched and wept
Together. Oh how often I have longed,
As we sate silent by his restless couch,
To fall upon thy neck and mix our tears,
And talk of him. I am his own poor cousin.
Thou wilt not hate me?
Ann. Save that lost one, who
Would hate such innocence?
Jul. 'T was not in hate,
But wild ambition. No ignoble sin
Dwelt in his breast. Ambition, mad ambition,
That was his idol. To that bloody god
He offered up the milk-white sacrifice,
The pure unspotted victim. And even then,
Even in the crime, without a breathing space
For penitence or prayer, my sword—Alfonso,
Thou would'st have gone to Heaven.
Ann. Art thou certain
That he is dead?
Jul. I saw him fall. The ground
Was covered with his blood.
Ann. Tell me the tale.
Didst thou—I would not wantonly recall
That scene of anguish—Didst thou search his wound?
Jul. Annabel, in my eyes that scene will dwell
For ever, shutting out all lovely sights,
Even thee, my Beautiful! That torturing thought
Will burn a living fire within my breast
Perpetually; words can nothing add,
And nothing take away. Fear not my frenzy!
I am calm now. Thou knowest how buoyantly
I darted from thee, straight o'er vale and hill,
Counting the miles by minutes. At the pass
Between the Albano mountains, I first breathed
A moment my hot steed, expecting still
To see the royal escort. Afar off
As I stood, shading with my hand my eyes,
I thought I saw them; when at once I heard
From the deep glen, east of the pass, loud cries
Of mortal terror. Even in agony
I knew the voice, and darting through the trees
I saw Alfonso, prostrate on the ground,
Clinging around the knees of one, who held
A dagger over him in act to strike,
Yet with averted head, as if he feared
To see his innocent victim. His own face
Was hidden; till at one spring I plunged my sword
Into his side; then our eyes met, and he——
That was the mortal blow!—screamed and stretched out
His hands. Falling and dying as he was,
He half rose up, hung speechless in the air,
And looked—Oh what had been the bitterest curse
To such a look! It smote me like a sword!
Here, here. He died.
Ann. And thou?
Jul. I could have lain
In that dark glen for ever; but there stood
The dear-bought, and the dear, kinsman and prince
And friend. We heard the far-off clang of steeds
And armed men, and, fearing some new foe,
Came homeward.
Ann. And did he, then, the unhappy,
Remain upon the ground?
Jul. Alas! he did.
Ann. Oh, it was but a swoon! Listen, dear Julian,
I tell thee I have comfort.
Jul. There is none
Left in the world. But I will listen to thee,
My faithfullest.
Ann. Count D'Alba sent to crave
An audience. Thou wast sleeping. I refused
To see him; but his messenger revealed
To Constance his high tidings, which she poured
In my unwilling ears, for I so feared
To wake thee, that ere half her tale was told
I chid her from me; yet she surely said
The Duke thy father—
Jul. What?
Ann. Approached the city.
Jul. Alive? Alive? Oh no! no! no! Dead! Dead!
The corse, the clay-cold corse!
Ann. Alive, I think;
But Constance—
Alf. He will sink under this shock
Of hope.
Ann. Constance heard all.
Jul. Constance! What ho,
Constance!
Ann. She hears thee not.
Jul. Go seek her! Fly!
If he 's alive—Why art thou not returned,
When that one little word will save two souls!
[*Exit Annabel.*

Alf. Take patience, dearest Count!
Jul. Do I not stand
Here like a man of marble? Do I stir?
She creeps; she creeps. Thou would'st have gone and back
In half the time.
Alf. Nay, nay, 'tis scarce a minute.
Jul. Thou may'st count hours and ages on my heart.
Is she not coming?
Alf. Shall I seek her!
Jul. Hark!
They've met. There are two steps; two silken gowns
Rustling; one whispering voice. Annabel! Constance!
Is he—one word! Only one word!

Enter Annabel.

Ann. He lives.

[*Julian sinks on his knees before the couch; Alfonso and Annabel go to him, and the scene falls.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A splendid Hall of Audience in the Royal Palace.

D'Alba and Bertone.

D'Alba. Again refuse to see me!
Bert. Nay, my lord,
She's still beside her husband's couch, and Paolo
Refused to bear the message.
D'Alba. Even her lacquey
Reads my hot love and her contempt. No matter!
How 's Julian?
Bert. Mending fast.
D'Alba. He 'll live! He'll live!
She watches over him, making an air
With her sweet breath;—he'll be immortal! Yet
If that dark tale be true—or half—Bertone,
Haste to the Court of Guard; seek Juan Castro,
A Spanish soldier; lead him home. I 'll join ye.
Hence! I expect the Barons, whom I summoned
To meet me here. Come back. See if the Princess
Will now admit me. No! 't would wake suspicion.
Hence to the Court of Guard. [*Exit Bertone.*
I think that scorn
Doth fan love more than beauty. Twice to-day
Have I paced patiently these royal halls,
Like some expecting needy courtier. Swell not,
Proud charmer, thy vast debt! Where lag these Barons?
Methinks this change might rouse—

Enter Calvi, followed by other Nobles.

Ha! Calvi, welcome.
Calvi. A fair good morrow, D'Alba!
D'Alba. Hast thou heard
These heavy tidings? The young King—
[*Approaching to meet the other Lords as they enter.*
My Lords,
Good morrow 's out of date. Know ye the news?
So men salute to-day.
Calvi. Alfonso dead?
D'Alba. Murdered.
Calvi. And Melfi king.
D'Alba. Ay. Here 's a letter.
[*giving a letter to Calvi.*
From the great Regent—Pshaw! how my rude tongue
Stumbles at these new dignities!—the King.
Therefore I summoned ye. He will be here
Anon.

Enter Valore and other Nobles.

Valore, thou art late.
Valore. This tale
Puts lead into men's heels. How fell it?
D'Alba. Read,
Count Calvi! Read!
Calvi (*reads*). "Alfonso being dead, and I hurt
"almost to death, they left me fainting on the ground,
"where I lay till a poor but honest muleteer bore me
"to his hut"——
He hath been wounded!
D'Alba. He 's alive. The boy!
Only the pretty boy! Read on. Read on.
Calvi (*reads*). "Make known these missives to our
"loyal people. We shall follow them straight. From
"your loving cousin,
"THE KING."
Valore. The King. How he will wear his state!
Why, D'Alba,
Thy worshipped Annabel chose well; she 'll be
A Queen.
D'Alba. Yet my poor title, had she graced it,
Comes by unquestioned, sheer descent, unstain'd
By dark mysterious murder. My good fathers—
Heaven rest their souls!—lie safely in the church-yard,
A simple race; whilst these high Princes—Sirs,
These palace walls have echoes, or I 'd tell ye—
'Tis a deep riddle, but amongst them all
The pretty boy is dead.

Enter Leanti.

Leanti!
Leanti. Lords,
The King is at the gate.
D'Alba. The King! Now, Sirs,
Don your quick smiles, and bend your supple knees;—
The King!

Enter Melfi.

(*Aside.*) He 's pale, he hath been hurt. (*Aloud.*)
My liege,
Your vassals bid you welcome.
Melfi. Noble Signors,
I greet you well. Thanks, D'Alba. Good Leanti,
I joy to see those reverend locks. I never
Thought to behold a friendly face again.
And now I bring ye sorrow. Death hath been
Too busy; though the ripe and bearded ear
Escaped his sickle—but ye know the tale;
Ye welcomed me as King; and I am spared
The painful repetition.
Valore. Sire, we know
From your own royal hand enough for joy

And sorrow: Death hath ta'en a goodly child
And spared a glorious man. But how——
Melfi. My Lord,
What would'st thou more? Before I entered here
Messina's general voice had hailed her Sovereign.
Lacks but the ceremonial form. 'T were best
The accustomed pageant were performed even now,
Whilst ye, Sicilian Barons, strength and grace
Of our Sicilian realm, are here to pledge
Solemn allegiance. Say I sooth, Count D'Alba?
D'Alba. In sooth, my liege, I know not. Seems to me
One form is wanting. Our bereaved state
Stands like a widow, one eye dropping tears
For her lost lord, the other turned with smiles
On her new bridegroom. But even she, the Dame
Of Ephesus, the buxom relict, famed
For quick dispatch o'er every widowed mate,
Woman, or state—even she, before she wed,
Saw the good man entombed. The Funeral first;
And then the Coronation.
Melfi. Scoffer! Lords,
The corse is missing.
Calvi. Ha! Perchance he lives!
Melfi. He fell, I tell thee.
Valore. And the assassin?
Melfi. He
Escaped, when I too fell.
D'Alba. He! Why, my liege,
Was there but one?
Melfi. What mean ye, Sirs? Stand off.
D'Alba. Cannot your Highness guess the murderer?
Melfi. Stand from about me, Lords! Dare ye to front
A King? What, do ye doubt me; you, or you?
Dare ye to doubt me? Dare ye look a question
Into mine eyes? Take thy gaze off! A King
Demands a modester regard. Now, Sirs,
What do ye seek? I tell ye, the fair boy
Fell underneath the assassin's sword; and I,
Wounded almost to death, am saved to prove
My subjects' faith, to punish, to reward,
To reign, I tell ye, nobles. Now, who questions?
Who glares upon me now? What! are ye mute?
Leanti. Deign to receive our homage, Sire, and pardon
The undesigned offence. Your Highness knows
Count D'Alba's mood.
Melfi. And he knows mine. Well! Well!
Be all these heats forgotten.
Calvi (*to D'Alba.*) How his eye
Wanders around the circle!
Melfi. Ye are met,
Barons of Sicily, in such august
And full assemblage as may well beseem
Your office, honour well yourselves and me;
Yet one is missing,—greatest, first and best,—
My son. Knows not Prince Julian that his father
Is here? Will he not come? Go some one say
That I would see him. [*Exit Calvi.*
Valore. Sire, the prince hath lain
Sick of a desperate malady.
Melfi. Alas!
And I—Sick didst thou say?
Valore. Eight days have passed
Since he hath left his couch.
Leanti. He 's better now.
The gentle Princess, who with one young page
Hath tended him——
Melfi. What page?
Leanti. A strange boy,
Seen but of few, young Theodore.
Melfi. A stranger!
Say on. The Princess——?
Leanti. As I crossed the hall
I met her, with her own glad step, her look
Of joy; and when I asked how fared Prince Julian?
She put her white hands into mine, with such
A smile, and then passed on.
Melfi. Without a word?
Leanti. Without a word, save the mute eloquence
Of that bright smile.
D'Alba. (*aside.*) Oh 't was enough! on him!
Smile on that dotard! Whilst I—(*aloud*) Why my lords
Here 's a fine natural sympathy; the son
Sickens at the father's wound! The very day!
The very hour! He must have known the deed—
Perhaps he knows the assassin——
Melfi. Stop.
D'Alba. My liege,
I speak it in his honour. Many an heir
Had been right glad to step into a throne
Just as the mounting pulse of youth beat high;—
A soldier too! and with a bride so fair,
So delicate, so fashioned for a Queen
By cunning nature. But he—for full surely
He knew——
Melfi. Stop. No, no, no, he knew it not!
He is my son.

Enter Calvi, followed by Julian.

Calvi. My liege, the Prince!
Melfi. Already!
Pardon me, good my lords, that I request
A moment's loneliness. We have been near
To death since last—Have touched upon the grave,
And there are thoughts, which only our own hearts
Should hear. I pray ye pardon me. I'll join ye
Within the hour for the procession.
[*Exeunt D'Alba, Leanti, Valore, Calvi, &c.*
Julian!
Approach! Come nearer! Speak to me!
Jul. My Lord!
Melfi. Has he forgot to call me father!
Jul. Father!
Melfi. I know what thou would'st say. The hat
And sable plumes concealed—No more of it.
Jul. Oh, father!
Melfi. Rise, my son. Let us forget
What—How is Annabel? They say she has been
A faithful nurse. Thou hast been sick?
Jul. I'm well.
Melfi. Fie! when thou tremblest so.
Jul. I'm well! I have been
Sick, brainsick, heartsick, mad. I thought—I feared—
It was a foretaste of the pains of Hell
To be so mad and yet retain the sense
Of that which made me so. But thou art here,

And I——Oh nothing but a father's heart
Could ever have forgiven!
Melfi. No more! No more!
Thou hast not told me of thy wife.
Jul. She waits
To pay her duty.
Melfi. Stay. Count D'Alba looked
With evil eyes upon thee, and on me
Cast his accustomed tauntings. Is there aught
Amiss between ye?
Jul. No.
Melfi. He hath not yet
Perhaps forgotten your long rivalry
For Annabel's fair hand. A dangerous meaning
Lurked in those bitter gibes. A dangerous foe
Were D'Alba. Julian, the sea breeze to thee
Brings health, and strength, and joy. I have an errand
As far as Madrid. None so well as thou
Can bid it speed. Thou shalt away to-day;—
'T is thy best medicine;—thou and thy young wife.
The wind is fair.
Jul. To-day!
Melfi. Have I not said?
Jul. Send me just risen from a sick couch to Madrid!
Send me from home, from thee! Banish me! Father!
Canst thou not bear my sight?
Melfi. I cannot bear
Contention. Must I needs remind thee, Julian,
I also have been ill?
Jul. I'll go to-day.
How pale he is! I had not dared before
To look upon his face. I'll go to-day.
Melfi. This very hour!
Jul. This very hour.
Melfi. My son!
Now call thy—yet a moment. Where 's the boy—
He shall aboard with thee—thy pretty page?
Jul. The King? Mean'st thou the King?
Melfi. He whom thou call'st——
Jul. Wilt thou not say the King?
Melfi. Young Theodore.
Hearken, Prince Julian! I am glad, right glad
Of what hath chanced. 'T was well to bring him hither,
And keep him at thy side. He shall away
To Spain with thee, that Theodore—Forget
All other titles. He'll be glad of this.
A favourite page, a spoilt and petted boy,
To lie in summer gardens, in the shade
Of orange groves, whose pearly blossoms fall
Amidst his clustering curls, and to his lute
Sing tenderest ditties,—such his happy lot;
Whilst I——Go, bring thy wife.
Jul. He is the King.
Melfi. Call lady Annabel.
Jul. The King, I say,
The rightful King, the only King! I'll shed
The last drop in my veins for King Alfonso.
Melfi. Once I forgave thee. But to beard me thus,
And for a weak and peevish youth, a faintling,
A boy of a girl's temper; one who shrinks
Trembling and crouching at a look, a word,
A lifted finger, like a beaten hound.
Jul. Alas, poor boy! he hath no other friend
Since thou, who should'st defend him—Father, Father,
Three months have scarcely passed since thy dear brother,
(Oh surely thou lovedst him!) with the last words
He ever spake, besought thy guardian care
Of his fair child. Next upon me he turned
His dying eyes, quite speechless then, and thou—
I could not speak, for poor Alfonso threw
Himself upon my breast, with such a gush
Of natural grief, I had no utterance—
But thou didst vow for both protection, faith,
Allegiance; thou didst swear so fervently,
So deeply, that the spirit flew to Heaven
Smiling. I'll keep that oath.
Melfi. Even if again
Thy sword—
Jul. Urge not that on me. 'T is a fire
Here in my heart, my brain. Bethink thee, father,
Soldier or statesman, thine is the first name
Of Sicily, the General, Regent, Prince,
The unmatch'd in power, the unapproach'd in fame;
What could that little word, a King, do more
For thee?
Melfi. That little word! Why *that* is fame,
And power, and glory! That shall fill the world,
Lend a whole age its name, and float along
The stream of time, with such a buoyancy,
As shall endure when palaces and tombs
Are swept away like dust. That little word!
Beshrew thy womanish heart that cannot feel
Its spell! (*Guns and shouts are heard without.*
Hark! hark! the guns! I feel it now.
I am proclaimed. Before I entered here
'Twas known throughout the city that I lived,
And the boy-king was dead.
(*Guns, bells, and shouts again.*
Hark, King Rugiero!
Dost hear the bells and shouts? Oh 't is a proud
And glorious feeling thus at once to live
Within a thousand bounding hearts, to hear
The strong out-gushing of that present fame
For whose uncertain dim futurity
Men toil and slay and die! Without a crime—
I thank thee still for that—Without a crime—
For he'll be happier—I am a King. (*Shouts again.*
Dost thou not hear, Long live the King Rugiero?
Jul. The shout is weak.
Melfi. Augment it by thy voice.
Would the words choak Prince Julian? Cannot he
Wish long life to his father?
Jul. Live, my father!
Long live the Duke of Melfi!
Melfi. Live the King!
Jul. Long live the King Alfonso!
Melfi. Now, by Heaven,
Thou art still brainsick. There is a contagion
In the soft dreamy nature of that child,
That thou, a soldier—I was overproud
Of thee and thy young fame. That lofty brow
Seem'd form'd to wear a crown. Chiefly for thee—
Where is the Page?
Jul. Oh father, once again
Take pity on us all! For me! For me!

Thou hast always been to me the kindest, fondest—
Preventing all my wishes—I'll not reason,
I'll not contend with thee. Here at thy feet,
Prostrate in spirit as in form, I cry
For mercy! Save me from despair! from sin!

Melfi. Unmanly, rise! lest in that slavish posture
I treat thee as a slave.

Jul. Strike an thou wilt.
Thy words pierce deeper, to the very core!
Strike an thou wilt; but hear me. Oh my father,
I do conjure thee, by that name, by all
The boundless love it guerdons, spare my soul
This bitterness!

Melfi. I'll reign.

Jul. Ay, reign indeed;
Rule over mightier realms; be conqueror
Of crowned passions; king of thy own mind.
I've ever loved thee as a son, do this
And I shall worship thee. I will cling to thee;
Thou shalt not shake me off.

Melfi. Go to; thou art mad.

Jul. Not yet; but thou may'st make me so.

Melfi. I'll make thee
The heir of a fair crown.

Jul. Not all the powers
Of all the earth can force upon my brow
That heritage of guilt. Cannot I die?
But that were happiness. I'd rather drag
A weary life beneath the silent rule
Of the stern Trappist, digging my own grave,
Myself a living corse, cut off from the sweet
And natural kindness that man shows to man;
I'd rather hang, a hermit, on the steep
Of horrid Etna, between snow and fire;
Rather than sit a crown'd and honour'd prince
Guarded by children, tributaries, friends,
On an usurper's throne. (*Guns without.*

Melfi. I must away.
We'll talk of this anon. Where is the boy?

Jul. Safe.

Melfi. Trifle not with my impatience, Julian;
Produce the child. Howe'er thou may'st deny
Allegiance to the king, obey thy father.

Jul. I had a father.

Melfi. Ha!

Jul. But he gave up
Faith, loyalty, and honour, and pure fame,
And his own son.

Melfi. My son!

Jul. I loved him once,
And dearly. Still too dearly! But with all
That burning, aching, passionate old love
Wrestling within my breast; even face to face;
Those eyes upon me; and that trembling hand
Thrilling my very heart-strings—Take it off!
In mercy take it off!—Still I renounce thee.
Thou hast no son. I have no father. Go
Down to a childless grave.

Melfi. Even from the grave
A father's curse may reach thee, clinging to thee
Cold as a dead man's shroud, shadowing thy days,
Haunting thy dreams, and hanging, a thick cloud,
'Twixt thee and Heaven. Then, when perchance thine own
Small prattling pretty ones shall climb thy knee
And bid thee bless them, think of thy dead father,
And groan as thou dost now. (*Guns again.*
Hark! 'tis the hour!
I must away. Back to thy chamber, son,
And choose if I shall curse thee. [*Exit Melfi.*

Jul. Did he curse me?
Did he? Am I that withered, blasted wretch?
Is that the fire that burns my brain? Not yet!
Oh do not curse me yet! He's gone. The boy!
The boy! (*Rushes out.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Magnificent Cathedral. A Gothic Monument in the Foreground, with Steps round it, and the Figure of an Old Warrior on the top.

D'Alba, Leanti, Valore, Calvi, and other Nobles.

Calvi. Where stays the King?

Leanti. He's robing to assume
The Crown.

Calvi. What a gloom reigns in the Cathedral!
Where are the people, who should make and grace
This pageant?

Valore. 'Tis too sudden.

D'Alba. Saw ye not
How coldly, as the slow procession moved,
Men's eyes were fixed upon him? Silently
We passed amidst dull silence. I could hear
The chink of money, which the heralds flung,
Reverberate on the pavement. They, who stooped
To gather up the coin, looked on the impress
Of young Alfonso, sighed and shook their heads
As 'twere his funeral.

Calvi. Methinks this place,
The general tomb of his high line, doth cry
Shame on us! The mute citizens do mourn him
Better than we.

D'Alba. Therefore the gates are closed,
And none but peers of Sicily may pass
The guarded doors.

Leanti. Where is Prince Julian?

D'Alba. Sick.
Here comes the Mighty One, and the great Prelates
That shall anoint his haughty brow; 'tis bent
With a stern joy.

Enter Melfi, in Royal Robes, preceded by Nobles, Officers, &c. bearing the Crown, Archbishop, Bishops, &c.

Melfi. No! To no tapered shrine.
Here, reverend Fathers, here! This is my altar:
The tomb of my great ancestor, who first
Won from the Paynim this Sicilian crown,
And wore it gloriously; whose name I bear,
As I will bear his honour'd sceptre. Here,
At this most kingly altar, will I plight
My vow to Sicily, the nuptial vow
That links my fate to her's. Here I'll receive
Her Barons' answering faith. Hear me, thou shade
Of great Rugiero, whilst I swear to guard
With heart and hand the realm thy valour won,

The laws thy wisdom framed—brave legacy
To prince and people! To defend their rights,
To rule in truth and justice, peacefully,
If peace may be; and with the awful arm
Of lawful power to sweep the oppressor off
From thy blest Isle; to be the Peasants' King—
Nobles, hear that!—the Peasants' King and yours!
Look down, Ancestral Spirit, on my oath,
And sanctify and bless it! Now the crown.

D'Alba. What noise is at the gate?

Melfi. Crown me, I say.

Archb. 'Tis fallen! Save us from the ill omen!

Melfi. Save us
From thy dull hands, old dotard! Thou a Priest,
And tremble at the touch of power! Give me
The crown.

D'Alba. It fits thee not.

Melfi. Give me the crown,
And with a steady grasp it shall endue
These throbbing brows that burn till they be bound
With that bright diadem.

Enter Julian and Alfonso.

Jul. Stop. Place it here!
This is the King! the real, the only King!
The living King Alfonso!

Melfi. Out, foul traitor!
'T is an impostor.

Jul. Look on him, Count D'Alba!
Calvi, Valore, look! Ye know him well.
And ye that never saw him, know ye not
His father's lineaments? Remove thy hand
From that fair forehead. T 'is the pallid brow
Bent into pensiveness, the dropping eyelid,
The womanish changing cheek—his very self!
Look on him. Do ye know him? Do ye own
Your King?

Calvi. 'T is he.

D'Alba. The boy himself!

Jul. Now place
The crown upon his head; and hear me swear,
Low at his feet, as subject, kinsman, Prince,
Allegiance.

Alf. Rise, dear Cousin.

Jul. Father, kneel,
Kneel here with me, thou his first subject, thou
The guardian of the state, kneel first, and vow
Thy princely fealty.

Melfi. Hence, abject slave!
And thou, young minion——

Jul. to Alf. Fear not. Father, kneel!
Look where thou art. This is no place, my lord,
To dally with thy duty: underneath
Thy fathers sleep; above their banners wave
Heavily. Death is round about us, Death
And Fame. Have they no voice for thee? Not one
Of our long storied line but lived and died
A pure and faithful Knight, and left his son
Honour—proud heritage! I am thine heir,
And I demand that bright inheritance
Unstained, undimmed. Kneel, I implore thee! I,
Thy son.

Melfi. Off, cursed viper!
Off, ere I hurl thee on the stones!

Jul. I've done
My duty. Was it not my duty?

Alf. Julian,
Sit here by me; here on the steps.

D'Alba. Again
We must demand of thee, my Lord of Melfi,
How chanced this tale of murder? Here 's our Prince,
Safe and unhurt. But where 's the assassin? Where
The regicide? Where he that wounded thee?

Melfi. (*pointing to Julian.*) Demand of him.

D'Alba. Where be these murderers?
Art sure thou saw'st them, Duke? Or was 't a freak
Of the deft Fay Morgana? Didst thou feel
The trenchant blade? Or was the hurt thou talk'st of
A fairy wound, a phantasm? Once again
I warn thee, speak.

Melfi. Demand Prince Julian, Sir:
This work is his.

D'Alba. He speaks not. Little King,
What say'st thou?

Alf. Julian saved me.

D'Alba. Saved! From whom?
From what?

Alf. A king should have no memory
But for good deeds. My lords, an it so please you,
We 'll to the Palace. I 'll not wear to-day
This crown. Some fitting season; but not now.
I 'm weary. Let us home.

D'Alba. Ay, take him hence.
Home with him, Count Valore. Stay by him
Till I come to ye. Leave him not. Nay, Calvi,
Remain. Hence with the boy.

Alf. My cousin Julian,
Wilt thou not go with us?

Jul. I've done my duty.
Was 't not my duty? But look there! look there!
I cannot go with thee. I am his now—
All his.

Alf. Uncle——

Melfi. Away, bright spotted worm——

D'Alba. What, ho! the guard!

Alf. My Lord, where Julian is
I need no guard. Question no more of this,
But follow us.

[*Exeunt Alfonso, Valore, and other Nobles.*

Melfi. I do contemn myself
That I hold silence. Warriors, kinsmen, friends,
Barons of Sicily, the valiant princes
Of this most fertile and thrice famous Isle,
Hear me! What yonder crafty Count hath dared,
With subtle question and derisive smile,
To slide into a meaning, is as true
As he is false. I would be King; I'd reign
Over fair Sicily; I 'd call myself
Your Sovereign, Princes; thine, Count D'Alba, thine,
Calvi, and old Leanti—we were comrades
Many a year in the rough path of war.
And now ye know me all. I 'll be a King
Fit for this warlike nation, which brooks sway
Only of men. Yon slight fair boy is born
With a woman's heart. Let him go tell his beads.
For us and for our kingdom, I 'll be King.
I 'll lend unto that title such a name,
As shall enchase this bauble with one blaze

Of honour. I'll lead on to glory, lords,
And ye shall shine in the brightness of my fame
As planets round the sun. What say ye?
D'Alba. Never!
Calvi, &c. Never!
Melfi. Say thou, Leanti, thou 'rt a soldier
Worthy of the name,—a brave one! What say'st thou?
Leanti. If young Alfonso——
D'Alba. Peace. Why, this is well.
This morning I received a tale—I'm not
An over-believer in man's excellence;
I know that in this slippery path of life
The firmest foot may fail; that there have been
Ere now ambitious generals, grasping heirs,
Unnatural kinsmen, foul usurpers, murderers!—
I know that man is frail, and might have fallen
Though Eve had never lived.—Albeit I own
The smiling mischief's potency. But this,
This tale was made up of such several sins,
All of them devilish; treason, treachery,
And pitiless cruelty made murder pale
With their red shame,—I doubt not readily
When man and guilt are joined—but this the common
And general sympathy that links our kind
Forbade to believe. Yet now before you all,
His peers and mine, before the vacant throne
He sought to usurp, before the crown that fell
As conscious from his brow, I do arraign
Rugiero, Duke of Melfi, General, Peer,
Regent, and Prince, of Treason.
Melfi. Treason! D'Alba,
We quarrel not for words. Let these but follow
And bold emprise shall bear a happier name.
Sicilians, have ye lost your Island spirit?
Barons, is your ancient bravery tamed down
By this vain scoffer? I'll to the people. They
Love their old soldier.
D'Alba. Stop. Duke, I arraign thee
Of murder; planned, designed, attempted murder,
Though incomplete, on the thrice sacred person
Of young Alfonso, kinsman, ward, and King.
Wilt thou defend this too? Was 't a brave deed
To draw the assassin's sword on that poor child?
Seize him!
Melfi. Come near who dares! Where be thy proofs?
Where be thy witnesses?
D'Alba. There's one. Prince Julian,
Rouse thee! He sits erect and motionless
As yon ancestral image. Doth he breathe?
Rouse thee, and answer, as before thy God,
As there is truth in Heaven. Did'st thou not see
Thy father's sword at young Alfonso's breast?
Lay not the boy, already dead with fear,
At his false guardian's feet? Answer!
Melfi. Ay, speak,
Prince Julian! Dost thou falter now? On, on,
And drive the dagger home! On, on, I say.
Calvi. We wait your Highness' answer.
Jul. Which among ye
Dares question me? What are ye, Sirs?
D'Alba. The States
Of Sicily.
Jul. The States! Without a head!
Without a King! Without a Regent! States!
The States! Are ye the States that 'gainst all form
Of justice or of guardian law drive on
To bloody trial him your Greatest? Here too!
Here! Will ye build up scaffolds in your churches?
And turn grave priests to headsmen? I'll not answer.
Calvi. The rack may force thee.
D'Alba. He but smiles. Convey
The Duke to the Hall of Justice. We shall follow.
Go summon Juan Castro thither. Hence!
Why loiter ye?
Melfi. A word with thee, Prince Julian.
I pray ye listen, 't is no treason, lords.
I would but say, finish thy work. Play well
The part that thou hast chosen. Cast aside
All filial yearnings. Be a gallant foe.
Rush onward through the fight. Trample me down.
Tread on my neck. Be perfect in that quality
Which thou call'st justice. Quell thy womanish weakness.
Let me respect the enemy, whom once
I thought my son.
Jul. Once, father!
Melfi. I 'm no father!
Rouse not my soul to curse thee! Tempt me not
To curse thy mother—She whom once I deemed
A saint in purity; Be resolute,
Palter not with them. Lie not.
Jul. Did I ever?
Melfi. Finish thy work. On, soldiers!
[*Exit Melfi, guarded.*
D'Alba. Answer, Prince!
The Duke, as thou hast heard, disclaims thee.
Jul. Dare not
A man of ye say that. I am his son—
Tremble lest my sword should prove me so;—a part
Of his own being. He gave me this life,
These senses, these affections. The quick blood
That knocks so strongly at my heart is his—
Would I might spill it for him! Had ye no fathers,
Have ye no sons, that ye would train men up
In parricide? I will not answer ye.
D'Alba. This passion is thy answer. Could'st thou say
No; in that simple word were more comprised
Than in a world of fiery eloquence.
Canst thou not utter No? 'T is short and easy,
The first sound that a stuttering babe will lisp
To his fond nurse,—yet thy tongue stammers at it!
I ask him if his father be at once
Traitor and Murderer, and he cannot say,
No!
Jul. Subtle blood-thirsty fiend! I'll answer
To nought that thou canst ask. Murder! The king
Lives. Seek of him. One truth I'll tell thee, D'Alba,
And then the record of that night shall pass
Down to the grave in silence. But one sword
Was stained with blood in yonder glen—'t was mine!
I am the only guilty. This I swear
Before the all-seeing God, whose quenchless gaze
Pierced through that twilight hour. Now condemn
The Duke of Melfi, an ye dare! I'll speak
No more on this foul question.
Leanti. Thou the guilty?
Thou!

Jul. I have said it.
D'Alba. I had heard a tale—
Leanti. This must be sifted.
D'Alba. In that twilight hour
A mortal eye beheld them. An old Spaniard,
One of the guard—By heaven it is a tale
So bloody, so unnatural, man may scarce
Believe it!
Leanti. And the king still lives.
D'Alba. Why 't is
A mystery. Let's to the Hall of Justice
And hear this soldier. Sir, they are ambitious,
Father and son—We can pass judgment there,
This is no place;—Leanti, more ambitious
Than thou canst guess.
Jul. Ay, by a thousand fold!
I am an eaglet born, and can drink in
The sunlight, when the blinking owls go darkling,
Dazzled and blinded by the day. Ambitious!
I have had daydreams would have shamed the visions
Of that great master of the world, who wept
For other worlds to conquer. I 'd have lived
An age of sinless glory, and gone down
Storied and epitaphed and chronicled,
To the very end of time. Now—But I still
May suffer bravely, may die as a Prince,
A man. Ye go to judgment. Lords, remember
I am the only guilty.
Calvi. We must needs,
On such confession, give you into charge
A prisoner. Ho! Captain.
Leanti. Goes he with us?
D'Alba. No; for the hall is near, and they are best
Questioned apart. Walk by me, good Leanti,
And I will show thee why.
Leanti. Is 't possible
That Julian stabb'd his father?
D'Alba. No. Thou saw'st
They met as friends; no! no!
[*Exeunt Calvi and other Lords.*

Enter Annabel.

Ann. Where is he? Where?
Julian!
D'Alba. Fair Princess—
Ann. Stay me not. My Julian!
D'Alba. Oh, how she sinks her head upon his arm!
How her curls kiss his cheek! and her white hand
Lies upon his! The cold and sluggish husband!
He doth not clasp that loveliest hand, which nature
Fashioned to gather roses, or to hold
Bunches of bursting grapes.
Leanti. Count D'Alba, see,
We are alone. Wilt thou not come?
D'Alba. Anon.
Now he hath seized her hand, hath dared to grasp,
He shall not hold it long.
Leanti. They'll wait us, Count.
D'Alba. That white hand shall be mine.
[*Exeunt D'Alba and Leanti.*
Jul. My Annabel,
Why art thou here?
Ann. They said—I was a fool
That believed them!—Constance said she heard a cry,
Down with the Melfi! and the rumour ran
That there had been a fray, that thou wast slain.
But thou art safe, my Julian.
Jul. As thou seest.
Thou art breathless still.
Ann. Ay. I flew through the streets,
Piercing the crowds like light. I was a fool;
But thou hadst left me on a sudden, bearing
The young Alfonso with thee, high resolve
Fixed in thine eye. I knew not—Love is fearful;
And I have learnt to fear.
Jul. Thou tremblest still.
Ann. The Church is cold and lonely; and that seat,
At the foot of yon grim warrior, all too damp
For thee. I like not thus to see thee, Julian,
Upon a tomb. Thou must submit thee still
To thy poor nurse. Home! By the way thou'lt tell me
What hath befallen. Where is Alfonso?
Jul. Say
The King! the rightful, the acknowledged King!
Annabel, this rude stone 's the effigy
Of the founder of our line; the gallant chief
Who swept away the Saracen, and quelled
Fierce civil broils; and, when the people's choice
Crowned him, lived guardian of their rights, and died
Wept by them as a father. And methinks
To-day I do not shame my ancestor;
I dare to sit here at his feet, and feel
He would not spurn his son. Thou dost not grieve
To lose a crown, my fairest?
Ann. Oh no! no!
I 'm only proud of thee. Thy fame 's my crown.
Jul. Not fame but conscience is the enduring crown,
And wearing that impearled, why to lose fame
Or life were nothing.
Ann. Where 's thy father, Julian?
Forgive me, I have pained thee.
Jul. No. The pang
Is mastered. Where? He is a prisoner
Before the States. I am a prisoner here.
These are my guards. Be calmer, Sweetest. Rend not
This holy place with shrieks.
Ann. They seek thy life!
They 'll sentence thee! They 'll kill thee! No! they shall not,
Unless they kill me first. What crime—O God,
To talk of crime and thee!—What falsest charge
Dare they to bring?
Jul. Somewhat of yon sad night
They know.
Ann. Where 's Theodore! the page? the King?
Doth he accuse thee too?
Jul. Poor gentle Cousin!
He is as innocent as thou.
Ann. I 'll fetch him.
We 'll go together to the States. We 'll save thee.
We, feeble though we be, woman and boy,
We 'll save thee. Hold me not!
Jul. Where would'st thou go?
Ann. To the States.
Jul. And there?
Ann. I 'll tell the truth, the truth,

The irresistible truth! Let go. A moment
May cost thy life,—our lives. Nothing but truth,
That's all thy cause can need. Let go.
Jul. And he,
My father?
Ann. What's a thousand such as he
To thee, my husband! But he shall be safe.
He is thy father. I'll say naught can harm him.
He was ever kind to me! I'll pray for him.
Nay, an thou fear'st me, Julian, I'll not speak
One word; I'll only kneel before them all,
Lift up my hands, and pray in my inmost heart,
As I pray to God.
Jul. My loving wife, to Him
Pray, to Him only. Leave me not, my dearest;
There is a peace around us in this pause,
This interval of torture. I'm content
And strong to suffer. Be thou—

Enter D'Alba, Calvi, Leanti, and Nobles.

Ha! returned
Already! This is quick. But I'm prepared.
The sentence!
Ann. Tell it not! Ye are his Judges.
Ye have the power of life or death. Your words
Are fate. Oh speak not yet! Listen to me.
D'Alba. Ay; a long summer's day! What would'st thou?
Ann. Save him!
Save him!
D'Alba. He shall not die.
Ann. Now bless thee, D'Alba!
Bless thee! He's safe! He's free!
Jul. Once more I ask
His doom, for that is mine. If ye have dared,
In mockery of justice, to arraign
And sentence your great ruler, with less pause
Than a petty thief taken in the manner, what's
Our doom?
D'Alba. Sir, our great ruler (we that love not
Law's tedious circumstance may thank him) spared
All trial by confession. He avowed
Treason and regicide; and all that thou
Had'st said or might say, he avouched unheard
For truth; then cried, as thou hast done, for judgment,
For death.
Jul. I can die too.
Leanti. A milder doom
Unites ye. We have spared the royal blood.
D'Alba. Only the blood. Estates and honours all
Are forfeit to the King; the assembled States
Banish ye; the most holy Church declares ye
Beneath her ban. This is your sentence, Sir.
A Herald waits to read it in the streets
Before ye, and from out the city gate
To thrust ye, outlawed, excommunicate,
Infamous amongst men. Ere noon to-morrow
Ye must depart from Sicily; on pain
Of death to ye the outlaws, death to all
That harbour ye, death to whoe'er shall give
Food, shelter, comfort, speech. So pass ye forth
In infamy!
Ann. Eternal infamy
Rest on your heads, false judges! Outlawed! Banished!
Bereft of state and title! Thou art still
Best of the good, greatest amongst the great,
My Julian! Must they die that give thee food
And rest and comfort? I shall comfort thee,
I thy true wife! I'll never leave thee. Never!
We'll walk together to the gate, my hand
In thine, as lovers. Let's set forth. We'll go
Together.
Jul. Ay; but not to-night. I'll meet thee
To-morrow at the harbour.
Ann. No! no! no!
I will not leave thee.
Jul. Cling not thus. She trembles.
She cannot walk. Brave Sir, we have been comrades;
There is a pity in thine eye, which well
Beseems a soldier. Take this weeping lady
To King Alfonso. Tell the royal boy,
One, who was once his Cousin and his friend,
Commends her to him. Go. To-morrow, dearest,
We'll meet again. Now for the sentence. Lords,
I question not your power. I submit
To all, even to this shame. Be quick! be quick!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Royal Palace.

D'Alba, Bertone.

D'Alba. I've parted them at last. The livelong night
The little King lay, like a page, before
Her chamber door; and ever as he heard
A struggling sigh within, he cried, Alas!
And echoed back her moan, and uttered words
Of comfort. Happy boy!
Bert. But he is gone
Towards the gate: be sure to meet Prince Julian.
D'Alba. For that I care not, so that I secure
The vision which once flitted from my grasp
And vanished like a rainbow.
Bert. Yet is Julian
Still dangerous.
D'Alba. Why, after noon to-day—
And see the sun's already high!—he dies
If he be found in Sicily. Take thou
Two resolute comrades to pursue his steps,
Soon as the time be past. Did'st thou not hear
The proclamation? Know'st thou where he bides?
And Melfi?
Bert. Good, my lord, 't is said the Duke
Is dead.
D'Alba. Dead!
Bert. Certain 't is that yesternight
He walked from out the Judgment Hall like one
Dreaming, with eyes that saw not, ears that heard
No sound, staggering and tottering like old age
Or infancy. And when the kingly robe
Was plucked from him, and he forced from the gate,
A deep wound in his side burst forth; the blood
Welled like a fountain.
D'Alba. And he died?

Bert. He fell
Fainting; and Julian, who had tended him
Silently, with a spirit so absorbed
His own shame seemed unfelt, fell on his neck
Shrieking like maddening woman. There we left him,
And there 't is said he hath outwatched the night.
D'Alba. There on the ground?
Bert. So please you.
D'Alba. Thou hast known
A softer couch, Prince Julian. Is the litter
Prepared? And the old groom?
Bert. My lord, he waits
Your pleasure.
D'Alba. Call him hither. [*Exit Bertone.*
Blood welled out
From a deep wound! Said old Leanti sooth?
No matter. Either way he 's guilty.

Re-enter Bertone with Renzi.

Ha!
A reverend knave. Wast thou Prince Julian's huntsman?
Renzi. An please you, Sir, I was.
D'Alba. Dost know the Princess?—
Doth she know thee?
Renzi. Full well, my Lord. I tended
Prince Julian's favourite greyhound. It was strange
How Lelia loved my lady,—the poor fool
Hath pined for her this week past,—and my lady
Loved Lelia. She would stroke her glossy head,
And note her sparkling eyes, and watch her gambols,
And talk of Lelia's beauty, Lelia's speed,
Till I was weary.
D'Alba. And the angel deemed
This slave as faithful as her dog! The better.
Dost thou love ducats, Renzi?
(*Tossing him a purse.*
Canst thou grace
A lie with tongue and look and action?
Renzi. Ay.
D'Alba. Go to the Princess; say thy master sent thee
To guide her to him, or the young Alfonso,—
Use either name, or both. Spare not for tears,
Or curses. Lead her to the litter; see
That Constance follows not. Bertone 'll gain
Admittance for thee. Go.
[*Exit Renzi.*
Bertone, seek me
A supple churchman;—Know'st thou any? One
Not scrupulous; one who loves gold, and laughs
At conscience. Bring him to me. I must hasten
Silently home. Let not the Princess guess
That I have left the palace.
Bert. No, my Lord.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.

The Country just without the Gates of Messina.

A hilly back-ground.

Melfi, lying on the Stage, Julian.

Jul. He wakes! He is not dead! I am not yet
A parricide. I dare not look on him;
I dare not speak.
Melfi. Water! My throat is scorched.
[*Exit Julian.*
My tongue cleaves to my mouth. Water! Will none
Go fetch me water? Am I here alone?
Here on the bloody ground, as on that night—
Am I there still? No! I remember now.
Yesterday I was a King; to-day I 'm nothing;
Cast down by my own son; stabbed in my fame;
Branded and done to death; an outlaw where
I ruled! He, whom I loved with such a pride,
With such a fondness, hath done this; and I,
I have not strength to drag me to his presence
That I might rain down curses on his head,
Might blast him with a look.

Enter Julian.

Jul. Here 's water. Drink!
Melfi. What voice is that? Why dost thou shroud thy face?
Dost shame to show thyself? Who art thou?
Jul. Drink!
I pray thee, drink!
Melfi. Is't poison?
Jul. 'T is the pure
And limpid gushing of a natural spring
Close by yon olive-ground. A little child,
Who stood beside the fount, watching the bright
And many-coloured pebbles, as they seemed
To dance in the bubbling water, filled for me
Her beechen cup, with her small innocent hand,
And bade Our Lady bless the draught! Oh drink!
Have faith in such a blessing!
Melfi. Thou should'st bring
Nothing but poison. Hence, accursed cup!
I 'll perish in my thirst. I know thee, Sir.
Jul. Father!
Melfi. I have no son. I had one once,
A gallant gentleman; but he—What, Sir,
Didst thou never hear of that Sicilian Prince,
Who made the fabulous tale of Greece a truth,
And slew his father? The old Laius fell
At once, unknowing and unknown; but this
New Œdipus, he stabbed and stabbed and stabbed,
And the poor wretch cannot die.
Jul. I think my heart
Is iron that it breaks not.
Melfi. I should curse him—
And yet—Dost thou not know that I 'm an outlaw,
Under the ban? They stand in danger, Sir,
That talk to me.
Jul. I am an outlaw too.
Thy fate is mine. Our sentence is alike.
Melfi. What! have they banished thee?
Jul. I should have gone,
In very truth, I should have gone with thee,
Ay, to the end of the world.
Melfi. What, banish thee!
Oh, foul ingratitude! Weak changeling boy!
Jul. He knows it not. Father, this banishment
Came as a comfort to me, set me free
From warring duties and fatiguing cares,
And left me wholly thine. We shall be happy;
For she goes with us, who will prop thy steps,
As once the maid of Thebes, Antigone,
In that old tale. Choose thou whatever land,—

All are alike to us. But pardon me!
Say thou hast pardoned me!
Melfi. My virtuous son!
Jul. Oh thanks to thee and Heaven! He sinks; he 's faint;
His lips wax pale. I'll seek the spring once more:
'T is thirst.
Melfi. What music 's that?
Jul. I hear none.
Melfi. Hark!
Jul. Thou art weak and dizzy.
Melfi. Angels of the air,
Cherub and Seraph, sometimes watch around
The dying, and the mortal sense, at pause
'Twixt life and death, doth drink in a faint echo
Of heavenly harpings!
Jul. I have heard so.
Melfi. Ay;
But they were just men, Julian! They were holy.
They were not traitors.
Jul. Strive against these thoughts—
Thou wast a brave man, father!—fight against them,
As 'gainst the Paynims thy old foes. He grows
Paler and paler. Water from the spring;
Or generous wine;—I saw a cottage near.
Rest thee, dear father, till I come. [*Exit Julian.*
Melfi. Again
That music! It is mortal; it draws nearer.
No. But if men should pass, must I lie here
Like a crushed adder? Here in the highway
Trampled beneath their feet?—So! So! I'll crawl
To yonder bank. Oh that it were the deck
Of some great Admiral, and I alone
Boarding amidst a hundred swords! the breach
Of some strong citadel, and I the first
To mount in the cannon's mouth! I was brave once.
Oh for the common undistinguished death
Of battle, pressed by horses' heels, or crushed
By falling towers! Any thing but to lie
Here like a leper!

Enter Alfonso, Valore, and Calvi.

Alf. 'T is the spot where Julian——
And yet I see him not. I 'll pause awhile;
'T is likely he 'll return. I 'll wait.
Calvi. My liege,
You 're sad to-day.
Alf. I have good cause to be so.
Valore. Nay, nay, cheer up.
Alf. Didst thou not tell me, Sir,
That my poor Uncle 's banished, outlawed, laid
Under the church's ban?
Calvi. He would have slain
His Sovereign.
Alf. I ne'er said it. Yesterday
I found you at his feet. Oh, would to Heaven
That crown were on his head, and I——What's that?
Val. The moaning wind.
Calvi. He was a traitor, Sire.
Alf. He was my kinsman still. And Julian! Julian!
My cousin Julian! he who saved my life,
Whose only crime it was to be too good,
Too great, too well beloved,—to banish him!
To tear him from my arms!
Calvi. Sire, he confessed——
Alf. Ye should have questioned me. Sirs, I 'm a boy,
A powerless, friendless boy, whose name is used
To cover foul oppression. If I live
To grasp a sword—but ye will break my heart
Before that hour. Whence come those groans?
[*Seeing Melfi.*
My Uncle
Stretched on the ground, and none to tend thee! Rest
Thy head upon my arm. Where 's Julian? Sure
I thought to find him with thee. Nay, be still;
Strive not to move.
Melfi. I fain would kneel to thee
For pardon.
Calvi. Listen not, my liege. The States
Sentenced the Duke of Melfi; thou hast not
The power to pardon. Leave him to his fate.
Val. 'T were best your Highness came with us.
Alf. Avoid
The place! Leave us, cold, courtly lords! Avoid
My sight! Leave us, I say. Send instant succour,
Food, water, wine, and men with hearts, if courts
May breed such. Leave us. [*Exit Calvi and Valore.*
Melfi. Gallant boy!
Alf. Alas!
I have no power.
Melfi. For all I need thou hast.
Give me but six feet of Sicilian earth,
And thy sweet pardon.
Alf. Talk not thus. I 'll grow
At once into a man, into a king,
And they shall tremble, and turn pale with fear,
Who now have dared——

Enter Julian.

Julian!
Jul. Here 's water! Ha!
Alfonso! I thought Pity had been dead.
I craved a little wine, for the dear love
Of heaven, for a poor dying man; and all
Turned from my prayer. Drink, father.
Alf. I have sent
For succour.
Jul. Gentle heart!
Melfi. The time is past.
Music again.
Alf. Ay; 't is the shepherd's pipe
From yonder craggy mountain. How it swings
Upon the wind, now pausing, now renewed,
Regular as a bell.
Melfi. A passing bell.
Alf. Cast off these heavy thoughts.
Melfi. Turn me.
Alf. He bleeds!
The blood wells out.
Melfi. It eases me.
Jul. He sinks!
He dies! Off! he 's my father. Rest on me.
Melfi. Bless thee.
Jul. Oh, no! no! no! I cannot bear
Thy blessing. Twice to stab, and twice forgiven—
Oh curse me rather!
Melfi. Bless ye both. [*Dies.*
Alf. He 's dead,

And surely he died penitent. That thought
Hath in it a deep comfort. The freed spirit
Gushed out in a full tide of pardoning love.
He blest us both, my Julian; even me
As I had been his son. We 'll pray for him
Together, and thy Annabel shall join
Her purest orisons. I left her stretched
In a deep slumber. All night long she watched
And wept for him and thee; but now she sleeps.
Shall I go fetch her? She, better than I,
Would soothe thee. Dost thou hear? He writhes as though
The struggling grief would choke him. Rouse thee, Julian,
Calm thee. Thou frighten'st me.

Jul. Am I not calm?
There is my sword. Go.

Alf. I 'll not leave thee.

Jul. King?
Dost thou not see we 've killed him? Thou had'st cause;
But I, that was his son.———Home to thy Palace!
Home!

Alf. Let me stay beside thee; I 'll not speak,
Nor look, nor move. Let me but sit and drop
Tear for tear with thee.

Jul. Go.

Alf. My Cousin Julian——

Jul. Madden me not. I 'm excommunicate,
An exile, and an outlaw, but a man.
Grant me the human privilege to weep
Alone o'er my dead father. King, I saved
Thy life. Repay me now a thousand-fold——
Go.

Alf. Ay; for a sweet comforter.

Enter Paolo.

Paolo. My liege,
The lady Annabel———

Jul. What! is she dead?
Have I killed her?

Alf. Speak, Paolo. In thy charge
I left her.

Jul. Is she dead?

Paolo. No. Heaven forefend!
But she hath left the Palace.

Jul. 'T is the curse
Of blood that 's on my head; on all I love.
She 's lost.

Alf. Did she go forth alone?

Paolo. My liege,
Prince Julian's aged huntsman, Renzi, came,
Sent, as he said, by thee, to bear her where
Her Lord was sheltered.

Jul. Hoary traitor!

Paolo. She
Followed him, nothing fearing; and I too
Had gone, but D'Alba's servants closed the gates,
And then my heart misgave me.

Jul. Where 's my sword?
I 'll rescue her! I 'll save her!

Alf. Hast thou traced
Thy lady?

Paolo. No, my liege. But much I fear—
Certain a closed and guarded litter took
The way to the western suburb.

Jul. There, where lies
The palace of Count D'Alba! Stained—defiled—
He hath thee now, my lovely one! There 's still
A way—Let me but reach thee! One asylum—
One bridal bed—One resting place. All griefs
Are lost in this. Oh would I lay as thou,
My father! Leave him not in the highway
For dogs to mangle. He was once a Prince.
Farewell!

Alf. Let me go with thee.

Jul. No. This deed
Is mine. [*Exit Julian.*

Alf. Paolo, stay by the corse. I 'll after,
He shall not on this desperate quest alone.

Paolo. Rather, my liege, seek D'Alba:—As I deem
He still is at thy Palace. Watch him well,
Stay by him closely. So may the sweet lady
Be rescued, and Prince Julian saved.

Alf. Thou 'rt right.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

An Apartment in an old Tower; a rich Gothic Window, closed, but so constructed as that the Light may be thrown in, near it a small arched Door, beyond which is seen an Inner Chamber, with an open Casement.—Annabel is borne in by D'Alba and Guards, through a strong Iron Door in the side Scene.

D'Alba, Annabel, Guards.

D'Alba. Leave her with me. Guard well the gate; and watch
That none approach the tower. [*Exeunt Guards.*
Fair Annabel!

Ann. Who is it calls? Where am I? Who art thou?
Why am I here? Now heaven preserve me, D'Alba!
Where 's Julian? Where 's Prince Julian? Where 's my husband?
Renzi, who lured me from the palace, swore
It was to meet my husband.

D'Alba. Many an oath
First sworn in falsehood turns to truth. He 's here.
Calm thee, sweet lady.

Ann. Where? I see him not.
Julian!

D'Alba. Another husband.

Ann. Then he 's dead!
He 's dead!

D'Alba. He lives.

Ann. Heard I aright? Again!
There is a deafening murmur in mine ears,
Like the moaning sound that dwells in the sea shell,
So that I hear nought plainly. Say 't again.

D'Alba. He lives.

Ann. Now thanks to Heaven! Take me to him.
Where am I?

D'Alba. In an old and lonely tower
At the end of my poor orchard.

Ann. Take me home.

D'Alba. Thou hast no home.

Ann. No home! His arms! his heart!
Take me to him.
D'Alba. Sweet Annabel, be still.
Conquer this woman's vain impatiency,
And listen. Why she trembles as I were
Some bravo. Oh that man's free heart should bow
To a fair cowardess! Listen. Thou know'st
The sentence of the Melfi?
Ann. Ay, the unjust
And wicked doom that ranked the innocent
With the guilty. But I murmur not. I love
To suffer with him.
D'Alba. He is banished; outlawed;
Cut off from every human tie;—
Ann. Not all.
I am his wife.
D'Alba. Under the Church's ban.
I tell thee, Annabel, that learned Priest,
The sage Anselmo, deems thou art released
From thy unhappy vows; and will to-night—
Ann. Stop. I was wedded in the light of day
In the great church at Naples. Blessed day!
I am his wife; bound to him evermore
In sickness, penury, disgrace. Count D'Alba,
Thou dost misprize the world, but thou must know
That woman's heart is faithful, and clings closest
In misery.
D'Alba. If the Church proclaim thee free—
Ann. Sir, I will not be free; and if I were,
I'd give myself to Julian o'er again—
Only to Julian! Trifle thus no longer.
Lead me to him. Release me.
D'Alba. Now, by heaven,
I'll bend this glorious constancy. I've known thee
Even from a little child, and I have seen
That stubborn spirit broken: not by fear,
That thou canst quell; nor interest; nor ambition;
But love! love! love! I tell thee, Annabel,
One whom thou lov'st, stands in my danger. Wed me
This very night—I will procure a priest
And dispensations, there shall nothing lack
Of nuptial form—Wed me, or look to hear
Of bloody justice.
Ann. My poor father, Melfi!
D'Alba. The Regent? He is dead.
Ann. God hath been merciful.
D'Alba. Is there no other name? no dearer?
Ann. Ha!
D'Alba. Hadst thou such tender love for this proud father,
Who little recked of thee, or thy fair looks;—
Is all beside forgotten?
Ann. Speak!
D'Alba. Why, Julian!
Julian, I say!
Ann. He is beyond thy power.
Thanks, thanks, great God! He's ruined, exiled, stripped
Of name, and land, and titles. He's as dead.
Thou hast no power to harm him. He can fall
No deeper. Earth hath not a lowlier state
Than princely Julian fills.
D'Alba. Doth not the grave
Lie deeper?
Ann. What? But thou hast not the power!
Hast thou? Thou canst not. Oh be pitiful!
Speak, I conjure thee, speak!
D'Alba. Didst thou not hear
That he was exiled, outlawed, banished far
From the Sicilian Isles, on pain of death,
If, after noon-to-day, he e'er were seen
In Sicily? The allotted bark awaits;
The hour is past; and he is here.
Ann. Now heaven
Have mercy on us! D'Alba, at thy feet,
Upon my bended knees—Oh pity! pity!
Pity and pardon! I'll not rise. I cannot.
I cannot stand more than a creeping worm
Whilst Julian's in thy danger. Pardon him!
Thou wast not cruel once. I've seen thee turn
Thy step from off the path to spare an insect;
I've marked thee shudder, when my falcon struck
A panting bird;—though thou hast tried to sneer
At thy own sympathy. D'Alba, thy heart
Is kinder than thou knowest. Save him, D'Alba!
Save him!
D'Alba. Be mine.
Ann. Am I not his?
D'Alba. Be mine;
And he shall live to the whole age of man
Unharmed.
Ann. I'm his—Oh spare him!—Only his.
D'Alba. Then it is thou that dost enforce the law
On Julian; thou, his loving wife, that guid'st
The officer to seize him where he lies
Upon his father's corse; thou that dost lead
Thy husband to the scaffold;—thou his wife,
His loving wife! Thou yet may'st rescue him.
Ann. Now, God forgive thee, man! Thou torturest me
Worse than a thousand racks. But thou art not
So devilish, D'Alba. Thou hast talked of love;—
Would'st see me die here at thy feet? Have mercy!
D'Alba. Mercy! Ay, such as thou hast shown to me
Through weeks and months and years. I was born strong
In scorn, the wise man's passion. I had lived
Aloof from the juggling world, and with a string
Watched the poor puppets ape their several parts:
Fool, knave, or madman; till thy fatal charms,
Beautiful mischief, made me knave and fool
And madman; brought revenge and love and hate
Into my soul. I love and hate thee, lady,
And doubly hate myself for loving thee.
But, by this teeming earth, this starry Heaven,
And by thyself the fairest stubbornest thing
The fair stars shine upon, I swear to-night
Thou shalt be mine. If willingly, I'll save
Prince Julian;—but still mine. Speak. Shall he live?
Canst thou not speak? Wilt thou not save him?
Ann. No.
D'Alba. Did she die with the word! Dost hear me, lady?
I asked thee would'st thou save thy husband?
Ann. No.
Not so! Not so!
D'Alba. 'T is well. [*Exit D'Alba.*
Ann. Stay! Stay! He's gone.

Count D'Alba! Save him! Save him! D'Alba's gone,
And I have sentenced him. (*After a pause.*
He would have chosen so,
Would rather have died a thousand deaths than so
Have lived! Oh who will succour me, shut up
In this lone tower! none but those horrid guards,
And yonder hoary traitor, know where the poor,
Poor Annabel is hidden; no man cares
How she may perish—only one—and he—
Preserve my wits! I'll count my beads; 'twill calm me:
What if I hang my rosary from the casement?
There is a brightness in the gorgeous jewel
To catch men's eyes, and haply some may pass
That are not pitiless. This window 's closed;
But in yon chamber—Ah, 't is open! There
I'll hang the holy gem, a guiding star,
A visible prayer to man and God. Oh save me
From sin and shame! Save him! I'll hang it there.
[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE

The same as the last; the arched Door nearly closed.

Annabel.

Ann. I cannot rest. I wander to and fro
Within my dreary prison, as to seek
For comfort and find none. Each hour hath killed
A hope that seemed the last. The shadows point
Upward. The sun is sinking. Guard me, heaven,
Through this dread night! (*A gun is heard without.*
What evil sound—All sounds
Are evil here! Is there some murder doing?
Or wantonly in sport.

Enter Julian through the arched Door.

Jul. Annabel!
Ann. Julian!
Jul. My wife! Art thou still mine?
Ann. Thine own.
Jul. She smiles!
She clings to me! her eyes are fixed on mine
With the old love, the old divinest look
Of innocence! It is yet time. She 's pure!
She 's undefiled!—Speak to me, Annabel.
Tremble not so.
Ann. 'T is joy. Oh I have been
So wretched! And to see thee when I thought
We ne'er should meet again? How did'st thou find me?
Jul. The rosary! the blessed rosary
Shone in the sun-beam, like a beacon fire,
A guiding star! Thrice holy was its light
That led me here to save——
Ann. Oh blessings on thee!
How? where? what way? The iron door is barred!
Where didst thou enter, Julian!
Jul. Through the casement
Of yonder chamber.
Ann. What? that grim ascent!
That awful depth! Did'st thou dare this for me?
And must I?—But I fear not. I 'll go with thee.
I 'm safe of foot, and light. I 'll go.
Jul. Thou can'st not.
Ann. Then go thyself, or he will find thee here,
He and his ruffian band. Let us part now.
Kiss me again. Fly, fly from Sicily!—
That fearful man—but he is all one lie—
Told me thy life was forfeited.
Jul. He told thee
A truth.
Ann. Oh fly! fly! fly!
Jul. My Annabel,
The bloodhounds that he laid upon the scent
Have tracked me hither. Did 't thou hear a gun?
For once the ball passed harmless.
Ann. Art thou hurt?
Art sure thou art not?
Jul. Yes. But they who aimed
That death are on the watch. Their quarry 's lodged.
We can escape them—one way—only one!
Ann. How? What way?
Jul. Ask not.
Ann. Whither?
Jul. To——my father.
Ann. Then he 's alive—Oh happiness! They told me
That he was dead. Why do we loiter here?
Let 's join him now.
Jul. Not yet.
Ann. Now! now! Thou know'st not
How horribly these walls do picture to me
The several agonies whereof my soul
Hath drunk to-day. I have been tempted, Julian,
By one—a fiend! tempted till I almost thought
God had forsaken me. But thou art here
To save me, and my pulse beats high again
With love and hope. I am light-hearted now,
And could laugh like a child—only these walls
Do crowd around me with a visible weight,
A palpable pressure; giving back the forms
Of wildest thoughts that wandered through my brain,
Bright chattering Madness, and sedate Despair,
And Fear the Great Unreal!—Take me hence!
Take me away with thee!
Jul. Not yet, not yet.
Thou sweetest wretch! I cannot—Dotard! Fool!
I must. Not yet! not yet!—Talk to me, Annabel;
This is the hour when thou wast wont to make
Earth Heaven with lovely words; the sun-set hour,
That woke thy spirit into joy. Once more
Talk to me, Annabel.
Ann. Ay, all day long,
When we are free. Thy voice is choked; thy looks
Are not on me; thy hand doth catch and twitch
And grasp mine painfully,—that gentle hand!
Jul. O God! O God! that right hand!—kiss it not!
Take thy lips from it!
Ann. Can'st thou save me, Julian?
Thou always dost speak truth. Can'st save thyself?
Shall we go hence together?
Jul. Ay, one fate—
One home.
Ann. Why that is bliss. We shall be poor—

Shall we not, Julian? I shall have a joy
I never looked for; I shall work for thee,
Shall tend thee, be thy Page, thy 'Squire, thy all,—
Shall I not, Julian?
Jul. Annabel, look forth
Upon this glorious world! Look once again
On our fair Sicily, lit by that sun
Whose level beams do cast a golden shine
On sea, and shore, and city, on the pride
Of bowery groves; on Etna's smouldering top;—
Oh bright and glorious world! and thou of all
Created things most glorious, tricked in light,
As the stars that live in Heaven!
Ann. Why dost thou gaze
So sadly on me?
Jul. The bright stars, how oft
They fall, or seem to fall! The Sun—look! look!
He sinks, he sets in glory. Blessed orb,
Like thee—like thee—Dost thou remember once
We sate by the sea-shore when all the Heaven
And all the ocean seemed one glow of fire,
Red, purple, saffron, melted into one
Intense and ardent flame, the doubtful line
Where sea and sky should meet was lost in that
Continuous brightness; there we sate and talked
Of the mysterious union that blessed orb
Wrought between earth and heaven, of life and death,
High mysteries!—and thou didst wish thyself
A spirit sailing in that flood of light
Straight to the Eternal Gates, didst pray to pass
Away in such a glory. Annabel!
Look out upon the burning sky, the sea
One lucid ruby—'t is the very hour!
Thou 'lt be a Seraph at the Fount of Light
Before———
Ann. What, must I die? And wilt thou kill me?
Canst thou? Thou can'st to save——
Jul. To save thy honour!
I shall die with thee.
Ann. Oh no! no! live! live!
If I must die—Oh it is sweet to live,
To breathe, to move, to feel the throbbing blood
Beat in the veins,—to look on such an earth
And such a Heaven,—to look on thee! Young life
Is very dear.
Jul. Would'st live for D'Alba?
Ann. No!
I had forgot. I 'll die. Quick! Quick!
Jul. One kiss!
Angel, dost thou forgive me?
Ann. Yes.
Jul. My sword!—
I cannot draw it.
Ann. Now!—I 'm ready.

Enter Bertone, and two Murderers.

Bert. Seize him!
Yield thee, Prince Julian! Yield thee! Seize the lady.
Jul. Oh fatal, fond delay! Dare not come near us!
Stand off! I 'll guard thee, sweet. But when I fall,
Let him not triumph.
Bert. Yield thee! Strike him down.
Jul. Thou canst die then, my fairest.

The two murderers have now advanced close to Julian.

Bert. Now!

[*One of the murderers strikes at Julian with his sword; Annabel rushes before him, receives the wound aimed at him, and falls at his feet.*

Ann. (*before she is wounded.*) For thee!
Then after. For thee
'T is sweet! (*dies.*
Jul. Fiend, hast thou slain her? Die! die! die!
Come on. (*fights and kills him.*
Bert. Call instant help! Hasten the Count!
[*Exit the other murderer.*

(*Julian and Bertone fight, and Julian kills him.*

Jul. My wife!
My murdered wife! Doth she not breathe? I thought—
My sight is dim—Oh no! she 's pale! she 's cold!
She 's still! If she were living she would speak
To comfort me. She 's mute! she 's stiff! she 's—dead!
Why do I shiver at the word, that am
Death's factor, peopler of unhallowed graves,
Slayer of all my race! not thee! not thee!
God, in his mercy, guided the keen sword
To thy white bosom,—I could not. Lie there.
I 'll shroud thee in my mantle. (*covering her with it.*
The rude earth
Will veil thy beauty next. One kiss!—She died
To save me.—One kiss, Annabel! I slew
The slave that killed thee,—but the fiend, the cause—
Is he not coming?—I will chain in life
Till I 've avenged thee; I could slay an army
Now in my strong despair. But that were mercy.
He must wear daggers in his heart. He loved her;—
I 'll feed his hopes—and then—Ay—ha! ha! ha!
That will be a revenge to make the fiends
Laugh—ha! ha! ha! I 'll wrap me in this cloak
(*taking one belonging to the dead bravo.*
And in the twilight—So!—He will not know
My voice—it frightens me!—I have not hidden
Thee quite, my Annabel! There is one tress
Floating in springy grace—as if—she's dead!
She's dead! I must not gaze, for then my heart
Will break before its time. He comes. The stairs
Groan at his pressure.

Enter D'Alba.

D'Alba (*entering, to an Attendant*).
Back, and watch the gate!—
All 's tranquil. Where 's the traitor?
Jul. Dead.
D'Alba. Who slew him?
Jul. I.
D'Alba. And the lady,—where is she?
Jul. At rest.
D'Alba. Fair Gentleness! After this perilous storm
She needs must lack repose. I 'll wait her here.
Friend! thou hast done good service to the state
And me; we 're not ungrateful. Julian's sword
Fails him not often; and the slave who fled
Proclaimed him Victor.
Jul. He slew two.
D'Alba. And thou
Slew'st him? Ay there he lies in the ermined cloak
Of royalty, his haughty shroud! Six ells

Of rude uncostly linen serves to wrap
Your common corse; but this man was born swathed
In regal purple; lived so; and so died.
So be he buried. Let not mine enemy
Call me ungenerous. Roll him in his ermine
And dig a hole without the city gate
For him and the proud Regent. Quick! I'd have
The funeral speedy. Ah! the slaughtering sword
Lies by him, brown with clotted gore. Hence! hence!
And drag the carrion with thee.
Jul. Wilt thou not
Look on the corse?
D'Alba. I cannot wait her waking:
I must go feast my eyes on her fair looks—
Divinest Annabel! My widowed bride!—
Where is she?
Jul. (*uncovering the body.*) There. Now gaze thyself to Hell!
Gloat with hot love upon that beauteous dust!—
She 's safe! She 's dead!
D'Alba. Julian!
Jul. But touch her not—
She 's mine.
D'Alba. Oh perfectest and loveliest thing!
Eternal curses rest upon his head
Who murdered thee!
Jul. Off! off! Pollute her not!
She 's white! She 's pure!—Curses! Pour curse for curse
On the foul murderer! On him who turned
The sweet soul from her home, who slew her father,
Hunted her husband as a beast of prey,
Pursued, imprisoned, lusted, left no gate
Open save that to Heaven!—Off! gaze not on her!
Thy look is profanation.

Enter Alfonso, Leanti, Valore, &c.

Alf. (*entering.*) Here, Leanti!
This way! Oh sight of horror! Julian! Julian!
Valore. The Princess dead! Why, D'Alba—
Leanti. Seize him, guards.
Lead him before the States. This bloody scene
Calls for deep vengeance.
D'Alba. If I were not weary
Of a world that sweats under a load of fools—
Old creaking vanes that turn as the wind changes—
Lords, I 'd defy ye! I 'd live on for ever!
And I defy ye now. For she is gone—
The glorious vision!—and the Patriarch 's years
Were valueless. Do with me as ye will.—
Ye cannot call back her.
Leanti. Off with him!
[*Exit D'Alba guarded.*
Alf. Julian!
Wilt thou not speak?
Jul. I have been thanking heaven
That she is dead.
Valore. His wits are gone.
Alf. My Julian,
Look on me. Dost thou know me? I'm thy Cousin,
Thy comforter.
Jul. She was my Comforter!
And now—But I do know thee; thou'rt the King;
The pretty boy I loved—She loved thee too;
I'm glad thou'rt come to close my eyes. Draw nearer
That I may see thy face. Where art thou?
Alf. Here!
Jul. Poor child, he weeps! Send for the honoured dead
Beside the city gate,—he pardoned me!
Bury us in one grave,—all in one grave!
I did not kill her. Strew her with white flowers,
For she was innocent.
Leanti. Cheer thee! Take hope!
Val. Raise up his head.
Alf. My Julian!
Jul. He forgave me,—
Thou know'st he did!—White flowers! Nothing but white! (*dies.*
Leanti. He 's gone!
Alf. And I am left in the wide world
Alone. My Julian!

EPILOGUE.

WRITTEN BY T. A. TALFOURD, ESQ.

Is not her lot intolerably hard
Who does this pious office for the Bard?
Who comes applauses not her own to win,
Or pay the penance for another's sin?
To tack, lest gentle moralisers rail,
A drawling comment to a doubtful tale;
To break with hollow mirth the sacred spell
Which the poor poet rarely weaves too well;
Or if his sorrows haplessly are laugh'd at,
Look grave for wit to throw his closing shaft at,
Methinks our Author's sex you shrewdly guess—
"It is a Lady's Drama"—frankly "yes."
Yet let no censure on her daring fall,
When all "Life's idle business" is—to scrawl;
Our tender bosoms learn in songs to melt,
And send their griefs to press—as soon as felt;
No thought in lone obscurity decays,
But dies away in neatly published lays;
No tender hope can bloom and fade unseen,
It leaves its fragrance—in a magazine;
The bashful heart, whom deep emotions bless,
Hides its soft secrets in the daily press;
With hints of well-assumed despair beguiles,
And execrates mankind to win their smiles;
A woman sure may claim no small compassion,
Who has this plea—she 's only in the fashion.
O, if the fair's prerogative it be
To watch supreme o'er calumny and tea;
To slay an Author's hopes with daintiest sneers,
And change the fates of poets as of peers;
Regard not *her* unwomanly who seeks
To draw down sacred tears o'er beauty's cheeks,
Who for her sex, by artless scenes, would keep
Its dearest right—to weep with those that weep;
Who if to-night her humble muse hath brought
To some sad heart a train of gentle thought;
On some warm spirit shed that blest relief,
A generous sympathy with kindred grief,
With joy returns to life's secluded ways,
And asks no recompense of noisier praise.

RIENZI, A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Cola di Rienzi, *afterwards Tribune of the People.*
Stephen Colonna, *a great Nobleman of Rome.*
Angelo Colonna, *his Son.*
Ursini, *a great Nobleman, rival to Colonna.*
Savelli, Cafarello, } *Lords of the Colonna faction.*
Frangipani, *a partisan of Ursini, also a Nobleman.*
Alberti, *Captain of the Guard.*
Paolo, *a Roman Citizen.*
Camillo, *Rienzi's Servant.*
Nuncio, Ambassador, Nobles, Citizens, Guards, &c.

Lady Colonna, *Stephen Colonna's Wife.*
Claudia, *Rienzi's daughter.*
Berta, Teresa, Rosa, } *Claudia's attendants.*
Ladies, Attendants, &c.

Scene—Rome, *in the Fourteenth Century.*

RIENZI.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Rome in the fourteenth century.—A Street in Rome.—A Temple in Ruins, in the back-ground a Portico, with columns in front of it, so managed that a person may appear and disappear amongst the pillars and recesses.

Enter Paolo, and three Citizens, meeting.

First Cit. Ah, Messer Paolo, a good morrow to thee!
The streets are full to-day. I have not seen
Such an outpouring of our Roman hive
Since the last jubilee. Whence comes the swarm?
Pao. The stirring Ursini, on a hot canvass
For their proud chief, the factious Martin.
First Cit. He,
Our senator! a proper ruler! sick, too,
And like to die.
Second Cit. Nay, he were harmless, then.
But 't is his brother, John, of Ursini,
The subtle John, that drives this business onward.
First Cit. A proper ruler! Martin Ursini,
That seized the Widow Landi's house to make
A kennel for his hounds—that carried off
The pretty child Emilia Fano—none
Hath e'er beheld her since.
Second Cit. 'T was likelier John!
The dark, smooth, subtle John. He 's the prime mover
Of these iniquities.
Third Cit. Ye have bold tongues.
First Cit. Art thou of their black faction?
Third Cit. No: I ply
My trade, and hold my peace.
Pao. Stephen Colonna
Should have been senator.
First Cit. No—he 's too old:
The Count Savelli, or young Angelo.
Second Cit. 'T is ill to choose between them.
Third Cit. Ay, and dangerous
To meddle with such great ones. Dost not see
A man in yonder porch? (*Looking toward the ruin. Rienzi appears in the Temple, with a piece of decayed marble in his hands.*
Pao. Our honest neighbour,
Cola Rienzi, poring o'er some stone
With legend half defaced. Thou knowest Cola?
First Cit. A follower of the Colonna?
Pao. Ay:
He haunts their palaces, and, with rancorous hate,
Pursues the Ursini. Didst never hear
How his young brother, poor Antonio, fell,
Murdered by their base groom? He hates the Ursini,
And follows the Colonna, scarce for love,
Rather to feast his learned spleen—for Cola
Is a ripe scholar—with sharp biting gibes
And dark predictions; a rank malcontent—
A bitter railer.
Second Cit. He approaches.
(*Rienzi comes forward, with the piece of marble.*
Pao. Cola,
What dragg'st thou there? a stone?
Rie. A mouldering stone!
An earth-encrusted stone!
Pao. A tombstone?
Rie. Ay—
Fit emblem of our city. Here be words,
An' ye could read them—words whose sense is dead
Even as the tongue. Did ye ever hear the sound
Of liberty—of country? Back to earth,
Rebellious stone! Back! back! thou preachest treason. (*Throwing the stone up the stage.*
First Cit. Treason to the Ursini! What will thy patrons,
The proud Colonna, say to this new power?
Rie. My patrons?—Oh, they 'll fight! they 'll fight! They 'll pour
Their men-at-arms into our streets, and wage
Fierce battle; burn and plunder, spoil and slay
Guilty or innocent, or friend or foe:
Their nature, sirs, their noble nature.
Pao. Well,
And we? What is our fate, sir prophet?

Rie. We!
Whichever wheel turn round, we shall be crushed
Between the millstones. That 's our destiny—
The destiny we earn.
Second Cit. He 's right. The barons
Make an arena of the city, vexing
Our quiet streets with brawls; plundering and killing
The peaceful citizens. Even the Colonna—
Albeit Stephen be a thought more brave,
And Angelo more kind—even the Colonna
Are tyrants to the people.
Third Cit. Yet the yoke
Must be endured.
Rie. Must! Be ye men?
Pao. Why, Cola,
What should we do?
Rie. Talk, talk, my masters! Speech
Is your fit weapon. Talk! Women and slaves
So drown the rattle of their chains. Talk! talk!
And tell in gentle whispers, gazing round,
Lest other list'ners than the storied walls
Of these old temples hear ye, how on Monday
A noble gallant, one of the Corsi, stole—
Seized, is the courtlier phrase—and wrung the neck
Of Adriani's falcon, a famed bird,
Unmatch'd in Italy—the poor old man
Weeps as it were his child—or how, on Tuesday,
Black John, of Ursini, spurred his hot courser
Right through a band of pious pilgrims, journeying
To our lady of Loretto—marry, two
Are lamed for life—or how, on Wednesday—
Pao. Stop—
Rie. I can go through the week.
Pao. But, for the pilgrims—
Art sure of that foul sacrilege?
Rie. As sure
As that thou standest there; as that the Ursini
Parade the city. (*Distant shouts.*) Hark! do ye not hear
The shouting mob approach?—Sure as that ye
Who frown, and lift your eyes, and shake your heads,
And look aghast at such foul sacrilege,
Will join your voice to that base cry, and shout,
Long live the Ursini! I know ye, masters.
Pao. Cola, thou wrong'st us.
Rie. If I wrong ye—no!
Ye are Italians; men of womanish soul,
Faint, weak, emasculate: the generous wrath
Of the manly Roman, with his lofty tongue,
Lies buried—not for ever. (*Nearer shouts.*) Hark!
Here comes
The tyrant of to-day. Go, swell his train.
I'll to my porch again, and feed my spirit
On these mute marbles. (*Goes into the temple.*
Second Cit. A brave man.
Third Cit. Full surely,
A dangerous.

[*Paolo and Citizens retire to the back-ground in front of the Temple.*

Enter Officers, six Halberdiers, and Ursini, Frangipani, and two Lords, in conversation, followed by armed Attendants, and accompanied by a Crowd, who shout, "Live the Ursini," &c.

Urs. (*To the mob.*) Thanks, gentle friends. (*To the Lords.*) Yes, I expect to-morrow
A packet from Avignon; even Colonna
Will bow to Clement's mandate.
Fra. If he do not—
Urs. Oh, never doubt; if he refuse, why, then—
Doubt him not, Frangipani. Quicker, friends—
I hurry ye, my lords, but we are waited
At the Alberteschi Palace. Follow fast.
Crowd (*following.*) Live John of Ursini!
[*Exeunt Ursini, &c.—Paolo and the three Citizens come forward, and are stopped by an armed Attendant.*
Att. Why, what a sort of sullen citizens
Be here, that shout not! Doff thy bonnet, man!
Look at thy fellows! doff thy cap.
Pao. Good friend—
Att. What, must I be thy tierman?
[*Knocks off Paolo's hat with his spear—Rienzi rushes out from the Temple, wrests the spear from the Attendant, and strikes him down with it. Exit the Third Citizen.*
Rie. Down, vile minion!
Hath the slave harmed thee, Paolo?—Art thou hurt?
Look where the abject tyrant licks the dust.
The very stones of Rome cast back the load
Of his foul carcase!—yet he stirs! I 'm glad
The reptile is not dead.
First Cit. Fly, Cola!
Rie. Fly!
Pao. To the Colonna Palace—they will shield thee
From danger or pursuit. This is no time
For thanks. Fly, Cola!
Rie. Let them fly that fear.
Fly! why the evil doer flies, not he
That putteth down a wrong. Fly! I would call
Rome, universal Rome, to view this deed,
The type of that to come. Yon creeping slave,
Struck with the strong brute force of power, fell
Before my weaker arm, nerved by the spirit
Of righteous indignation. So shall fall
Tyrants and tyranny. Meet me to-night
On the Capitoline Hill. Now I can trust ye,
Now that the man is roused within your souls,
The Roman ardour.
Second Cit. One is gone.
Rie. Well, well,
A milder breeze had severed such light chaff
From the sound corn. Yon slave—he lives—he stirs.
Pao. I'll take him to my house.
Rie. And I, to-morrow,
Will find a fitter hospital. Farewell!
Remember midnight—at the Capitol!
Remember!

[*Exeunt Rienzi, Paolo, and Citizens, bearing off the Attendant.*

SCENE II.

An Apartment in Rienzi's House; a Roman chair, with a skein of red worsted; a Lattice down to the floor, opening into the Garden.

Enter Angelo and Claudia, through the Lattice.

Cla. Beseech thee, now, away, Lord Angelo—
Thou hast been here o'erlong.

Ang. Scarce whilst the sand
Ran through the tell-tale glass; scarce whilst the sun
Lengthened the shadow of the cedar.
Cla. See!
The sun is setting—see.
Ang. Scarce, whilst I said
A thousand times—I love.
Cla. Look to the sun.
Ang. I had rather gaze on thee.
Cla. And think how long
We sate beneath the myrtle shade, how long
Paced the cool trellis walk. When next thou steal'st
Hither, from thy proud palace, I must time thee
By seconds, as the nice physician counts
The boundings of the fevered pulse. Away,
Dear Angelo; think, if my father find thee—
Ang. Oh, talk not of him, sweet! why was I born
The heir of the Colonna! why art thou
Rienzi's daughter? What a world of foes,
Stern scorn, and fiery pride, and cold contempt
Are ranged betwixt us twain; yet love, and time,
Be faithful, mine own Claudia—time, and love!
Cla. Alas, alas!
Ang. Thy father loves thee, sweetest,
With a proud dotage, almost worshipping
The idol it hath framed. Thou fear'st not him?
Cla. Alas! I have learned to fear him; he is changed,
Grievously changed; still good and kind, and full
Of fond relentings—crossed by sudden gusts
Of wild and stormy passion. I have learned
A daughter's trembling love. Then, he 's so silent—
He, once so eloquent. Of old, each show,
Bridal, or joust, or pious pilgrimage,
Lived in his vivid speech. Oh! 't was my joy,
In that bright glow of rapid words, to see
Clear pictures, as the slow procession coiled
Its glittering length, or stately tournament
Grew statelier in his voice. Now he sits mute—
His serious eyes bent on the ground—each sense
Turned inward.
Ang. Somewhat chafes his ardent spirit.
Cla. And should I grieve him, too? Lord Angelo,
The love deserves no blessing, that deceives
A father.
Ang. Mine own Claudia!
Cla. We must part.
Ang. Oh, never talk of parting! 'T was Rienzi
That brought me hither first. Rememberest thou
A boy, scarce more than boy—thy lovely self
Scarce woman. Then was thy rare beauty stamped,
At once, within my heart, then, and for ever—
Thou canst not bid me leave thee, love and time—
And constancy—oh, be as faithful, Claudia,
As thou art fair!
Rie. (*without.*) Camillo!
Cla. Hence, begone!
Rie. (*without.*) Camillo!
Cla. 'T is his voice—away, away!
Here, through the lattice—by the garden gate.
[*Exit Angelo.*
Now Heaven forgive me, if it be a sin
To love thee, Angelo. (*Looking after him.*) My foolish heart
Beats an' it were. He 's gone—he 's hidden now
Behind the myrtle hedge: thank Heaven, thank Heaven!
He 's opening now the gate—I hear the key—
But my sense is fear-quickened: now 't is closed,
And all is safe. (*Sinks down into the chair.*) Oh, simple-heart, be still
Be still.

Enter Rienzi and Camillo.

Rie. Camillo, see that thou admit
Only Alberti.
Cam. None, save him?
Rie. None. Claudia!
[*Exit Camillo.*
Claudia, I say! She trembles at the sound
Of her own name, and flutters like a bird
Fresh caught, as I approach. It likes me ill
To scare thee thus, fair daughter. Time has been,
When thou hast listened for me—when my voice,
Half a street off—my footstep on the causeway—
Would bring my little handmaid, springing forth
With eager service, to fling wide the door,
And seize my cloak. Nay, nay, I need thee not.
Cla. Oh, let me take it, father!
Rie. Sit thee down,
And ply thy sewing. Hath Alberti—no—
The west is glowing still. Hark ye, fair mistress:
Crossing the hall but now, I saw a shadow
Upon the garden wall, as clearly traced,
By the sun's parting rays, as I see thee
Weaving fresh tangles in that ravelled skein,
Which thou affect 'st to wind. He must have passed
By yonder open lattice. Art thou dumb?
Didst thou not see him, Claudia? him whose shadow
Darkened the sunny wall?
Cla. Perchance, Camillo.
Rie. Camillo! old Camillo! when I told thee
I saw him plainly as thyself:—the form
Erect and stately; the proud head thrown back
Crested with waving plumes. Perchance, Camillo!
Claudia, with thine old Roman name, I gave thee
Precepts that might have made thee simply great,
As ever maiden of old Rome. Camillo!
Would'st thou deceive thy father? Pay'st thou thus
His love, his trust, his doting pride?
Cla. Oh, no!
No, no! I 'll tell thee all: forgive me, father,
Only forgive me!—thou shalt hear——
Rie. Not now,
Not now, my Claudia; cheer thee, sweet! I 'll hear
Thy tale some fitter season. Wipe thine eyes.
If I 've been harsh with thee, 't was love, my Claudia,
Love of my fairest daughter, and vexed thoughts
Of this oppressed city. Sit thee, sweet!
All is at peace between us: weep no more,
My Claudia.
Cla. This is joy.
Rie. I have been chafed
By one of yon base minions. But the hour
Of vengeance comes.
Cla. Of vengeance!
Rie. Say, of freedom:
Dost tremble at the sound?

Cla. Oh, father, each
Alike is terrible; for each brings war,
Fierce, desperate war.
Rie. Claudia, in these bad days,
When man must tread perforce the flinty path
Of duty, hard and rugged, fail not thou
Duly at night and morning to give thanks
To the all gracious power that smoothed the way
For woman's tender feet. She but looks on,
And waits and prays for the good cause, whilst man
Fights, struggles, triumphs, dies. Vex not thy mind
With thoughts of state, my dear one; there 's no danger:
All whom thou lov'st are safe; all, silly trembler.
Peace, peace! I will not hear thee: all are safe.

Enter Alberti.

Alberti, welcome. Be the scrolls affixed
On churches, at street corners, in the markets?
Art sure of the soldiers? Dost thou hold the watch?
Thine answer in a word.
Alb. In one word, yes.
All is prepared. I 'm waited at the castle;
Yet hearken, Cola; I saw count Savelli,
Colonna's kinsman, conning yon bold summons:
Thou hadst best avoid him.
Rie. Nay, confront him, rather:
I 'll to their palace, meet them, baffle them.
Hast heard aught of the Ursini?
Alb. They feast
High and elate within their walls.
Rie. Yon wretch
Was not even missed. Poor slave, he shall be cared for.
Now, for the last time—simple child, in, in!
Lay all thy cares to rest. In, in, my child!
Bless thee, my Claudia! my fair Claudia! Now
For Rome and Freedom. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Colonna Palace.

Enter Colonna, Cafarello, and Lady Colonna, and Nobles.

Col. What, Martin Ursini, our senator!
An Ursini, and of that hated race
The most abhorred, the worst. He chief of Rome!
Sick, too. Tush! tush!
Caf. The tale is rife, Colonna;
And, as I passed his palace, glancing lights
And sudden shouts and merry music spake
The high and liberal feasting which foreruns
Expected triumph.
Col. Martin Ursini
Head of the state! and the Colonna fallen
Beneath their rival's feet! His wanton vassals,
The meanest horseboys of his train, will spurn
My belted knights. Cousin, we must away
To Palestrina, and array in force
Our men-at-arms: they will be needed.
Lady C. Fie!
These brawls match ill with thy white hairs.
Col. Good wife,
Would'st have me turn a craven in mine age,
A by-word to mine enemies?
Lady C. Art thou not
Stephen Colonna, of that greatest name
The greatest? Which of these, proud Ursini,
May match with thee in fame? But thy old wreaths
Were won in nobler fields. These private feuds
Are grown a crying evil.

Enter Savelli.

Count Savelli!
Sav. A fair good evening, noble dame. Colonna,
Hear'st thou the news?
Col. Of Martin Ursini?
Sav. Nay, that were common, stale, and trivial.—See,
I bring ye tidings of rebellion, sirs;
High tidings! stirring tidings! prompt rebellion!
Headed—I pr'ythee guess.
Caf. Rare food for mirth,
If we may judge by look and tone. The wives
Of Rome revolted? or the husbands risen
Against their gentle dames.
Sav. 'T is a brief summons,
Fiery, but scholary, stern, bold, and plain—
Calling the citizens to meet to-night
And win their freedom. Such a scroll as this
Is fixed in every street.
Caf. How signed?
Sav. Guess! guess!
There lies the mirth: ye 'll never guess—read here.
(*Showing a scroll.*
Caf. What, Cola di Rienzi! honest Cola!
Who saves Colonna here a jester's charge,
A fool without the bells. Honest Rienzi!
'T is a device of the black Ursini.
Col. Likelier some freak of Cola's. He hath turned
A bitter knave of late, and lost his mirth,
And mutters riddling warnings and wild tales
Of the great days of heathen Rome; and prates
Of peace, and liberty, and equal law,
And mild philosophy, to us the knights
And warriors of this warlike age, who rule
By the bright law of arms. The fool's grown wise—
A grievous change.
Lady C. I ever thought him so:
A sad wise man, of daring eye, and free,
Yet mystic speech. When ye have laughed, I still
Have shuddered, for his darkling words, oft fell
Like oracles, answering with dim repose
To my unspoken thoughts, so that my spirit
Albeit unused to womanish fear, hath quail'd
To hear his voice's deep vibration. Watch him!
Be sure he is ambitious. Watch him, lords:—
He hath o'erleapt the barrier, poverty;
Hath conquered his mean parentage; hath clomb
To decent station, to high lettered fame;
The pontiff's notary, the honoured friend
Of Petrarch. Watch him well.
Col. Tush, tush! Rienzi—
Cola Rienzi—honest Cola, rise

'Gainst us! Fair wife, I deemed thee wiser. They
Who plot are silent. Would we were as sure
Of Martin Ursini! What says Avignon?
The holy father hath not joined the faction?

Enter Rienzi.

Sav. I know not: but the cardinals, his uncles,
Are powerful with Pope Clement.
Col. All the race,
Churchmen or laic, old or young, have craft
Veined in their stony hearts—the master-streak
Of that cold marble. Of the cardinals,
Gaetano is a soldier-priest, but wary,
And politic as valiant; Annibal,
A meek soft-spoken monk, who, crawling, climbs
Ambition's loftiest ladder. Of the nephews—
Rie. Despatch them at a stroke—say they 're thy foes.
Sav. Why, master Cola—
Rie. Say they are thy foes.
Sav. Art thou their friend? I have heard talk of wrongs
Thou hast suffered from the Ursini.
Rie. Ay, ay.—
A trifle of a life—a foolish brother
Killed in a midnight brawl. Your privilege,
Your feudal privilege! ye slay our brethren,
And we—we kiss the sword. This Martin Ursini—
Col. What of the knavish ruffian?
Rie. Mend thy phrase—
Shall ne'er be senator—yet mend thy phrase;
Bespeak him fair; ye may be friends.
Col. Friends?
Rie. Ay;
A day will come, when I shall see ye joined
In a close league.
Col. Joined! by what tie?
Rie. By hatred—
By danger—the two hands that tightest grasp
Each other—the two cords that soonest knit
A fast and stubborn tie: your true-love knot
Is nothing to it. Faugh! the supple touch
Of pliant interest, or the dust of time,
Or the pin-point of temper, loose, or rot,
Or snap love's silken band. Fear and old hate,
They are sure weavers—they work for the storm,
The whirlwind, and the rocking surge; their knot
Endures till death. Ye will be friends, I tell thee—
Ere yon inconstant moon hath waxed and waned,
Ye will be friends. Yet Martin Ursini
Shall ne'er be senator.
Sav. Why, master prophet,
Men say thou shalt be senator, or king,
Or emperor. Hast read the scroll? when goest thou
To head thy rebel band? See! see! (*gives the scroll.*
Rie. (*reading.*) "*At midnight.*"
Well, I come here to while away the time
Till that dread hour. "*Upon the Capitol.*"
Look that ye set forth scouts and men-at-arms
To seize the chiefs, and chase the multitude,
Like sheep before the dogs. Ye were best send
To man the castle walls, a triple guard.—
Who is the captain of the watch?
Sav. Alberti.
Rie. Ha, mine old friend! I counsel ye, my lords,
Seize me, and crush this great rebellion; me,
Cola Rienzi, honest Cola! Laugh ye?
An honest man hath played the rogue, ere now.—
Witness this scroll.
Col. A scurvy jest!
Rie. A jest!
Call it a jest, and 't is a mockery
Of all that in this worn-out world, survives
Of great and glorious. The eternal power
Lodged in the will of man, the hallowed names
Of freedom and of country!——If a truth—
Lady C. What, if a truth?
Rie. Then——Where is Angelo,
Thy goodly son, Madonna?
Col. Dost thou seek
A full-fledged gallant, and so gaily plumed,
Here, in his parent nest? If thou wouldst meet
The rover, go where Mandolines are heard,
Beneath coy beauty's lattice. Count Savelli
Has a fair daughter.
Caf. I heard him praise
Bianca Ursini.
Col. An Ursini!
Lady C. Calm thee, Colonna. Rest thee sure thy son
Will never stain thy honoured name—will never
Forget his proud obedience.
Rie. Say'st thou so?
Lady C. With a glad certainty.
Rie. Look to him, then.
Yet watch him as thou may, against thy will
He shall espouse the fairest maid in Rome;
The fairest and the greatest.
Sav. And as good
As she is great, and innocent as fair?
Rie. Even to the crowning of a poet's dream;
Gentle, and beautiful, and good. Yet mark me—
Against thy will! I said against thy will! [*Exit.*
Lady C. Hear'st thou? (*Calling after Rienzi.*)
He 's gone!
Sav. Dear lady think no more
Of this wild prophecy.
Lady C. Nay, I am sure
Of Angelo. Why dost thou seek thy sword?
Thou goest not forth so late, good husband?
Col. Yes:
The night is fair—I shall take horse at once
For Palestrina; thence to Avignon.
We 'll bide some struggle with these Ursini.
Will ye ride with me, kinsmen?
Caf. Joyfully.
Lady C. I 'll wait ye to the court. Yet, once again,
Beware Rienzi! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Before the gates of the Capitol, at midnight.

Alberti, Paolo, Citizens, &c.—Crowd in the back-ground.

First Cit. This is the chosen spot. A brave assemblage!
Second Cit. Why, yes. No marvel that Rienzi struck

So bold a blow. I had heard shrewd reports
Of heats, and discontents, and gathering bands,
But never dream'd of Cola.
Pao. 'T is the spot!
Where loiters he? The night wears on apace.
Alb. It is not yet the hour.
First Cit. Who speaks?
Another Cit. Alberti,
The captain of the guard; he, he and his soldiers,
Have joined our faction.
Alb. Comrades, we shall gain
An easy victory. The Ursini,
Drunk with false hope and brute debauch, feast high
Within their palace. Never wore emprise
A fairer face.
Pao. And yet the summer heaven,
Sky, moon and stars, are overcast. The saints
Send that this darkness——

Enter Rienzi.

Rie. Darkness! did ye never
Watch the dark glooming of the thunder cloud,
Ere the storm burst? We'll light this darkness, sir,
With the brave flash of spear and sword.
All the Citizens shout. Rienzi!
Live brave Rienzi! honest Cola!
Rie. Friends!
Citizens. Long live Rienzi!
Alberti. Listen to him.
Rie. Friends,
I come not here to talk. Ye know too well
The story of our thraldom. We are slaves!
The bright sun rises to his course, and lights
A race of slaves! He sets, and his last beam
Falls on a slave: not such as, swept along
By the full tide of power, the conqueror leads
To crimson glory and undying fame,
But base, ignoble slaves—slaves to a horde
Of petty tyrants, feudal despots; lords
Rich in some dozen paltry villages—
Strong in some hundred spearmen—only great
In that strange spell—a name. Each hour, dark fraud,
Or open rapine, or protected murder,
Cry out against them. But this very day,
An honest man, my neighbour, (*Pointing to Paolo*) there he stands—
Was struck—struck like a dog, by one who wore
The badge of Ursini; because, forsooth,
He tossed not high his ready cap in air,
Nor lifted up his voice in servile shouts,
At sight of that great ruffian. Be we men,
And suffer such dishonour? Men, and wash not
The stain away in blood? Such shames are common.
I have known deeper wrongs. I, that speak to ye,
I had a brother once, a gracious boy,
Full of all gentleness, of calmest hope—
Of sweet and quiet joy — there was the look
Of heaven upon his face, which limners give
To the beloved disciple. How I loved
That gracious boy! Younger by fifteen years,
Brother at once and son! He left my side,
A summer bloom on his fair cheeks—a smile
Parting his innocent lips. In one short hour
The pretty harmless boy was slain! I saw
The corse, the mangled corse, and when I cried
For vengeance!—Rouse, ye Romans!—Rouse, ye slaves!
Have ye brave sons? Look in the next fierce brawl
To see them die. Have ye fair daughters? Look
To see them live, torn from your arms, distained,
Dishonoured, and, if ye dare call for justice,
Be answered by the lash. Yet, this is Rome,
That sate on her seven hills, and from her throne
Of beauty ruled the world! Yet, we are Romans.
Why, in that elder day, to be a Roman
Was greater than a king! And once again—
Hear me, ye walls, that echoed to the tread
Of either Brutus! once again I swear,
The eternal city shall be free! her sons
Shall walk with princes. Ere to-morrow's dawn,
The tyrants——
First Cit. Hush! Who passes there?
(*Citizens retire back.*
Alb. A foe,
By his proud bearing. Seize him.
Rie. As I deem,
'T is Angelo Colonna. Touch him not—
I would hold parley with him. Good Alberti,
The hour is nigh. Away! [*Exit Alberti.*

Enter Angelo Colonna.

Now, sir! (*To Angelo.*
Ang. What be ye,
That thus in stern and watchful mystery
Cluster beneath the veil of night, and start
To hear a stranger's foot?
Rie. Romans.
Ang. And wherefore
Meet ye, my countrymen?
Rie. For freedom.
Ang. Surely,
Thou art Cola di Rienzi?
Rie. Ay, the voice—
The traitor voice.
Ang. I knew thee by the words.
Who, save thyself in this bad age, when man
Lies prostrate like yon temple, dared conjoin
The sounds of Rome and freedom?
Rie. I shall teach
The world to blend those words, as in the days
Before the Cæsars. Thou shalt be the first
To hail the union. I have seen thee hang
On tales of the world's mistress, till thine eyes,
Flooded with strong emotion, have let fall
Big tear-drops on thy cheeks, and thy young hand
Hath clenched thy maiden sword. Unsheath it now—
Now, at thy country's call! What, dost thou pause?
Is the flame quenched? Dost falter? Hence with thee,
Pass on! pass whilst thou may'st!
Ang. Hear me, Rienzi.
Even now my spirit leaps up at the thought
Of those brave storied days—a treasury
Of matchless visions, bright and glorified,
Paling the dim lights of this darkling world
With the golden blaze of heaven, but past and gone,
As clouds of yesterday, as last night's dream.

Rie. A dream! Dost see yon phalanx, still and stern?
An hundred leaders, each with such a band,
So armed, so resolute, so fixed in will,
Wait with suppressed impatience till they hear
The great bell of the Capitol, to spring
At once on their proud foes. Join them.
Ang. My father!
Rie. Already he hath quitted Rome.
Ang. My kinsmen!
Rie. We are too strong for contest. Thou shalt see
No other change within our peaceful streets
Than that of slaves to freemen. Such a change
As is the silent step from night to day,
From darkness into light. We talk too long.
Ang. Yet reason with them—warn them.
Rie. And their answer
Will be the gaol, the gibbet, or the axe,
The keen retort of power. Why, I have reasoned;
And, but that I am held, amongst your great ones,
Half madman and half fool, these bones of mine
Had whitened on yon wall. Warn them! They met
At every step dark warnings. The pure air,
Where'er they passed, was heavy with the weight
Of sullen silence; friend met friend, nor smiled,
Till the last footfall of the tyrant's steed
Had died upon the ear; and low and hoarse
Hatred came murmuring like the deep voice
Of the wind before the tempest. Sir, the boys—
The unfledged boys, march at their mother's hist,
Beside their grandsires; even the girls of Rome—
The gentle and the delicate, array
Their lovers in this cause. I have one yonder,
Claudia Rienzi—thou hast seen the maid—
A silly trembler, a slight fragile toy,
As ever nursed a dove, or reared a flower—
Yet she, even she, is pledged—
Ang. To whom? to whom?
Rie. To Liberty! Was never virgin vowed
In the fair temple over right our house
To serve the goddess, Vesta, as my child
Is dedicated to freedom. A king's son
Might kneel in vain for Claudia. None shall wed her,
Save a true champion of the cause.
Ang. I'll join ye; (*Gives his hand to Rienzi.*
How shall I swear?
Rie. (*To the People.*) Friends, comrades, countrymen!
I bring unhoped-for aid. Young Angelo,
The immediate heir of the Colonna, craves
To join your band.
All the Citizens shout—He's welcome!
Ang. Hear me swear
By Rome—by freedom—by Rienzi! Comrades,
How have ye titled your deliverer? consul—
Dictator, Emperor?
The People shout—Consul! Emperor! &c. &c.
Rie. No—
Those names have been so often steeped in blood,
So shamed by folly, so profaned by sin,
The sound seems ominous—I'll none of them.
Call me the tribune of the people; there
My honouring duty lies.

(*The Citizens shout*—Hail to our Tribune! *The bell sounds thrice; shouts again; and a military band is heard playing a march without.*
Hark—the bell, the bell!
The knell of tyranny—the mighty voice,
That, to the city and the plain—to earth,
And listening heaven, proclaims the glorious tale
Of Rome re-born, and freedom. See, the clouds
Are swept away, and the moon's boat of light
Sails in the clear blue sky, and million stars
Look out on us, and smile.
(*The gate of the Capitol opens, and Alberti and Soldiers join the People, and lay the keys at Rienzi's feet.*
Hark! that great voice
Hath broke our bondage. Look, without a stroke
The Capitol is won—the gates unfold—
The keys are at our feet. Alberti, friend,
How shall I pay thy service? Citizens!
First to possess the palace citadel—
The famous strength of Rome; then to sweep on,
Triumphant, through her streets.
(*As Rienzi and the People are entering the Capitol, he pauses.*
Oh, glorious wreck
Of Gods and Cæsars! thou shalt reign again,
Queen of the world; and I—come on, come on,
My people!
Citizens. Live Rienzi—live our Tribune!
[*Exeunt through the gates, into the Capitol.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The outside of a Court of Justice—a Crowd round the Gates—Persons descending the Steps from time to time.

Enter Paolo and the First Citizen, meeting the Second Citizen, who advances to them from the Steps.

Pao. (*to the Second Cit.*) How goes the trial?
Second Cit. Bravely.
Pao. (*to the First Cit.*) A good day!
Good neighbour, thou 'rt a stranger.
First Cit. I have been
Away from Rome, good Paolo, since the day
Of our deliverance, when Rienzi punished
A servant of the Ursini, for striking
Thy bonnet from thy head.
Pao. And now thou find'st
This same Rienzi in a way to punish
The master.
First Cit. Martin Ursini?
Pao. The tribune
Now sits in judgment on him.
First Cit. Wherefore?
Second Cit. Sir,
For a breach of the new law—the mighty plunder
Of a vast wreck, an argosy—a booty
To tempt an emperor.
First Cit. Martin Ursini!
Almost our senator! The fearful head
Of the fearfullest name in Rome.

Pao. Ay, he is like—(*to Cit. passing from the Hall.* How goes the trial?
Third Cit. Well.
Pao. Is like to swing
From a gibbet in the Forum.
First Cit. Will he dare?
Second Cit. Dare! why thou saw'st his spirit—not his power
Matches his will; and never lineal prince
Sate firmer on his throne, or lightlier swayed
The reins of empire. He hath swept away
The oppressors and extortioners—hath gained
Kingly allies—hath reconciled the pope—
Hath quelled the barons.
First Cit. Ay, I rode to Rome
With a follower of Colonna. Angelo
Hath won his father to submission.
(*Shouts within the Court—Persons come rapidly out.*
The prisoner is condemned.
Fourth Cit. He is. Rienzi
Heard him with a grave patience; almost leaning
To mercy. But the fact was flagrant.
(*Persons passing from the Court of Justice.*
First Cit. Hark!
Another shout. Where go ye?
Fifth Cit. To the Forum,
To wait the execution.

Enter Rienzi, attended; and followed by Ursini, Frangipani, and other nobles.

Second Cit. Ha, the Tribune!
And the great prisoner's kindred.
Citizens. Live Rienzi!
Live our just Tribune.
(*All shout when Rienzi is in the front.*
Urs. Good my lord, beseech ye—
Rie. Ye plead in vain.
Urs. Yet hear me. Force me not
To appeal against thy sentence.
Rie. Ay! to whom?
There stand my judges, lords, and yours—the people,
The free and honest people! Seek of them
If I hold even the scales of justice.
Citizens. Live
Our Tribune! our just Tribune.
(*Shout.—Exit Rienzi, with Citizens.*
Fra. Follow not,
But seek lord Angelo—he hath a power
Over this haughty despot.
Urs. Gods! what tyranny
Men will endure in freedom's name. Yes, yes!
Lord Angelo! My foeman though he be,
His old hereditary pride will rise
Against this churl's base purpose. If his power—
Fra. The daughter! Claudia. Quick to seek Colonna;
The Tribune holds his court at noon. Quick! quick!
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

An apartment in the Capitol.—A Couch.

Enter Claudia, Berta, Teresa, and Rosa.—All but Claudia embroidering, &c.

Ter. Sweet lady, why so sad?
Cla. I know not.
Ber. Try
Yon emerald carkanet, or let me braid
These pearls in thy long tresses.
Ter. She affects not
Such glittering baubles; rather sing to her
One of thy songs from the cold north.
Rosa. Shall Berta
Sing to thee, lady.
Cla. Yes, I care not. (*Goes to the couch and sits.*
Ter. Sing.

SONG.—BERTA.

The red rose is queen of the garden bower,
That glows in the sun at noon;
And the lady-lily 's the fairest flower
That swings her white bells in the breeze of June;
But they who come 'mid frost and flood,
Peeping from bank, or root of tree,
The primrose and the violet bud—
They are the dearest flowers to me.

The nightingale's is the sweetest song
That ever the rose hath heard;
And when the lark sings, the white clouds among,
The lily looks up to the heavenly bird:
But the robin, with his eye of jet,
Who pipes from the bare boughs merrily
To the primrose pale and the violet—
His is the dearest song to me.

Ter. Didst like the strain?
Cla. There 's deep wisdom in it.
The lowly blossom, and the wintery friend,
They are the dearest. I 'm set i' the sun
To wither.
Rosa. She is sad again. Wouldst hear
A merry story, lady? Or a tale of murder
To divert thee?
Ber. Or a legend,
Fresh from the Holy Land?

Enter Rienzi.

Ter. The Tribune! (*Claudia rises hastily.*
Rie. Leave us. (*The ladies rise to go out.*
Claudia—nay, start not! Thou art sad to-day;
I found thee sitting idly, 'midst thy maids—
A pretty, laughing, restless band, who plied
Quick tongue and nimble finger. Mute, and pale
As marble, those unseeing eyes were fixed
On vacant air; and that fair brow was bent
As sternly as if the rude stranger, Thought,
Age-giving, mirth-destroying, pitiless Thought,
Had knocked at thy young giddy brain.
Cla. Nay, father,
Mock not thine own poor Claudia.
Rie. Claudia used
To bear a merry heart, with that clear voice,
Prattling; and that light busy foot astir
In her small housewifery, the blithest bee
That ever wrought in hive.
Cla. Oh! mine old home!
Rie. What ails thee, lady bird!
Cla. Mine own dear home!
Father, I love not this new state; these halls,
Where comfort dies in vastness; these trim maids,
Whose service wearies me. Oh! mine old home!

My quiet, pleasant, with the myrtle
Woven round the casement; and the cedar by,
Shading the sun; my garden overgrown
With flowers and herbs, thick set as grass in fields;
My pretty snow-white doves; my kindest nurse;
And old Camillo. Oh! mine own dear home!

Rie. Why, simple child, thou hast thine old fond nurse,
And good Camillo; and shalt have thy doves,
Thy myrtles, flowers, and cedars; a whole province
Laid in a garden, an' thou wilt. My Claudia,
Hast thou not learnt thy power? Ask orient gems,
Diamonds, and sapphires, in rich caskets, wrought
By cunning goldsmiths; sigh for rarest birds
Of farthest Ind, like winged flowers, to flit
Around thy stately bower; and, at a wish,
The precious toys shall wait thee. Old Camillo!
Thou shalt have nobler servants—emperors, kings,
Electors, princes! not a bachelor
In Christendom but would right proudly kneel
To my fair daughter.

Cla. Oh! mine own dear home!

Rie. Wilt have a list to choose from? Listen, sweet!
If the tall cedar, and the branchy myrtle,
And the white doves, were tell-tales, I would ask them
Whose was the shadow on the sunny wall?
And if, at eventide, they heard not oft
A tuneful mandoline, and then a voice,
Clear in its manly depth, whose tide of song
O'erwhelmed the quivering instrument; and then
A world of whispers, mixed with low response,
Sweet, short, and broken, as divided strains
Of nightingales.

Cla. Oh, father! father!

Rie. Well!
Dost love him, Claudia?

Cla. Father!

Rie. Dost thou love
Young Angelo? Yes? Said'st thou yes? That heart—
That throbbing heart of thine, keeps such a coil,
I cannot hear thy words. He is returned
To Rome; he left thee on mine errand, dear one;
And now—Is there no casement-myrtle wreathed,
No cedar in our courts, to shade to-night
The lover's song?

Cla. Oh, father! father!

Rie. Now,
Back to thy maidens, with a lightened heart,
Mine own beloved child. Thou shalt be first
In Rome, as thou art fairest; never princess
Brought to the proud Colonna such a dower
As thou. Young Angelo hath chosen his mate
From out an eagle's nest.

Cla. Alas! alas!
I tremble at the height. Whene'er I think
Of the hot barons, of the fickle people,
And the inconstancy of power, I tremble
For thee, dear father.

Rie. Tremble! Let them tremble.
I am their master, Claudia, whom they scorned,
Endured, protected. Sweet, go dream of love.
I am their master, Claudia. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A Magnificent Hall in the Capitol.

Enter Colonna, Ursini, Frangipani, Caparello, the Nuncio, an Ambassador, Nobles, &c.

Col. Gibbet and cord! a base plebeian death!
And he the head of the great Roman name,
That rivalled the Colonna! Ursini,
Thy brother shall not die. The grief is thine,
The shame is general. How say ye, barons?

Urs. If ye resist, ye share his doom. Plead! plead!
Dissemble with the tyrant—stifle hate,
And master scorn, as I have done. Plead for him.

Col. To Cola! Can I frame my speech to sue
To Cola—most familiar of the drones
That thronged my hall of afternoons, content
To sit below the salt, and bear all jests—
The retinue and pest of greatness. Sue
To Cola!

Urs. Fear not, but revenge will come,
We being friends, from whose dissension sprang
The usurper's strength. An hour will come.

Enter Angelo.

Lord Angelo,
Thou wilt not fail us.

Ang. Surely, no! 't is stern,
Revengeful, cruel, pitiless! The people—
To soothe the fickle people—yet he 's wiser!
He 'll be persuaded.

Fra. He approaches. (*Music without.*

Col. What!
Ushered with music as a king.

Enter Rienzi attended.

Rie. Why, this
Is well, my lords, this full assemblage. Now
The chief of Rome stands fitly girt with names
Strong as their towers around him. Fall not off,
And we shall be impregnable. Lord Nuncio,
I should have asked thy blessing. I have sent
Our missions to the pontiff. Count Savelli—
My lord ambassador, I crave your pardon,
What news from Venice, the sea-queen? Savelli,
I have a little maiden who must know
Thy fairest daughter. Angelo, Colonna,
A double welcome! Rome lack'd her state,
Wanting her princely columns.

Col. Sir, I come
A suitor to thee. Martin Ursini—

Rie. When last his name was on thy lips—Well, sir,
Thy suit, thy suit! If pardon, take at once
My answer—No.

Ang. Yet, mercy—

Rie. Angelo,
Waste not thy pleadings on a desperate cause
And a resolved spirit. She awaits thee.
Haste to that fairer court. [*Exit Angelo.*
My lord Colonna,
This is a needful justice.

Col. Noble Tribune,
It is a crime which custom—
Rie. Ay, the law
Of the strong against the weak—your law, the law
Of the sword and spear. But, gentles, ye lie now
Under the good estate.
Sav. He is noble.
Rie. Therefore,
A thousand times he dies. Ye are noble, sirs,
And need a warning.
Col. Sick, almost to death.
Rie. Ye have less cause to grieve.
Fra. New-wedded.
Rie. Ay,
Madonna Laura is a blooming dame,
And will become her weeds.
Caf. Remember, Tribune,
He hath two uncles, cardinals. Wouldst outrage
The sacred college?
Rie. The lord cardinals,
Meek, pious, lowly men, and loving virtue,
Will render thanks to him who wipes a blot
So flagrant from their name.
Col. An Ursini!
Head of the Ursini!
Urs. Mine only brother!
Rie. And darest talk thou to me of brothers? Thou,
Whose groom—wouldst have me break my own just laws,
To save thy brother? thine! Hast thou forgotten
When that most beautiful and blameless boy,
The prettiest piece of innocence that ever
Breathed in this sinful world, lay at thy feet,
Slain by thy pampered minion, and I knelt
Before thee for redress, whilst thou—didst never
Hear talk of retribution! This is justice,
Pure justice, not revenge! Mark well, my lords—
Pure, equal justice. Martin Ursini
Had open trial, is guilty, is condemned,
And he shall die!
Col. Yet listen to us!
Rie. Lords,
If ye could range before me all the peers,
Prelates, and potentates of Christendom—
The holy pontiff kneeling at my knee,
And emperors crouching at my feet, to sue
For this great Robber, still I should be blind
As Justice. But this very day a wife,
One infant hanging at her breast, and two
Scarce bigger, first-born twins of misery,
Clinging to the poor rags that scarcely hid
Her squalid form, grasped at my bridle-rein
To beg her husband's life; condemned to die
For some vile petty theft, some paltry scudi—
And, whilst the fiery war-horse chafed and rear'd,
Shaking his crest, and plunging to get free,
There, 'midst the dangerous coil unmoved, she stood,
Pleading in broken words and piercing shrieks
And hoarse low shivering sobs, the very cry
Of nature! And, when I at last said no—
For I said no to her—she flung herself
And those poor innocent babes between the stones
And my hot Arab's hoofs. We saved them all—
Thank heaven, we saved them all! but I said no
To that sad woman, 'midst her shrieks. Ye dare not
Ask me for mercy now.
Sav. Yet he is noble!
Let him not die a felon's death.
Rie. Again!
Ye weary me. No more of this. Colonna,
Thy son loves my fair daughter. 'T is an union,
However my young Claudia might have graced
A monarch's side, that augurs hopefully—
Bliss to the wedded pair, and peace to Rome,
And it shall be accomplished. Good my lords,
I bid ye to the bridal; one and all,
I bid ye to the bridal feast. And now
A fair good morrow.
[*Exit Rienzi, attended by Nuncio, Ambassador, other Lords, &c.*
Sav. Hath stern Destiny
Clothed him in this man's shape, that in a breath,
He deals out death and marriage? Ursini!
Colonna! be ye stunned?
Col. I'll follow him!
Tyrant! usurper! base-born churl! to deem
That son of mine——
Urs. Submit, as I have done,
For vengeance. From our grief and shame shall spring
A second retribution; and this banquet—
This nuptial banquet, this triumphal hour,
Shall be the very scene of our revenge!
I may not loiter here. The fatal moment
Of our disgrace is nigh. Ere evening close,
I'll seek thee at thy palace. Seem to yield,
And victory is sure.
Col. I'll take thy counsel. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Capitol.

Enter Savelli, Frangipani, Cafarello, Camillo, and other Attendants.

Sav. He bears him like a prince, save that he lacks
The port serene of majesty. His mood
Is fitful: stately now, and sad; anon,
Full of a hurried mirth; courteous awhile,
And mild; then bursting, on a sudden, forth
Into sharp biting taunts.
Fra. And at the altar,
When he first found the proud and angry mother
Refused to grace the nuptials, even the nuncio
Quailed at his fiery threats.
Caf. I saw Colonna
Gnawing his lip for wrath.
Sav. Why, this new power
Mounts to the brain like wine. For such disease,
Your skilful leech lets blood.
Fra. Suspects he aught
Of our design? we hunt a subtle quarry.
Sav. But with a wilier huntsman.

Enter Ursini.

Ursini,
Hath every point been guarded? be the masquers
Valiant and strongly armed? have ye ta'en order
To close the gates—to seize his train—to cut
The cordage of the bell, that none may summon
The people to his rescue?

Urs. All is cared for,
And vengeance certain. Before set of sun,
We shall be masters of ourselves, of Rome,
And Rome's proud ruler. This quiet masque of ours—

Caf. What is the watchword?

Urs. Death.

Fra. Peace, peace—he comes!

Enter Angelo, Claudia, and Ladies.

Fra. No, 't is the blooming bride. Young Angelo
Hath no ill choice in beauty.

Sav. 'T is a maid
Shy as a ring-dove. See, how delicate,
How gentle, yet how coy! Poor pretty fool,
No harm must happen her.

Urs. None, none.

Caf. (*To Angelo.*) Good kinsman,
I would not have thee hear Savelli speak
Of thy fair bride.

Ang. Ah! doth he praise her? Lords,
Beseech ye sit. Savelli, I would fain
Make of thy daughter and my blushing wife
A pair of lovely friends. Look where they stand,
The fairest two in Rome.

Fra. The Tribune comes.

Enter Rienzi and Colonna.

Rie. Where lags our hostess? Take thy state, fair bride—
Thy one day's queenship. See, the nuptial wreath
Sits crown-like on thy brow; thy nuptial robe
Flows royally. Come, come, be gracious! Bid
A smiling welcome to the subject world.
Nay, never blush nor hang thy head; remember
Thou art a Colonna. Wouldst thou be the first
Of that proud name to ape the peasant's virtue,
Humility? Fie! fie!

Col. Sir, the Colonna—

Ang Nay, good, my father, sure to-day our name
Hath cause of pride.

Col. Heaven grant it prove so!

Sav. Lady,
Thou art silent still.

Ang. Shall I speak for thee, love?
Oh, weak and ineffectual were my words,
Matched with thy burning blush, thy quivering smile,
Thy conscious silence, Claudia!—Gentle friends,
Ye are nobly welcome.

Rie. This is well, fair son!
Yet we lack mirth. Have ye no masque astir?
No dance, no music, no quaint mystery,
To drive away the spectre, Thought? A bridal
Is but a gilt and painted funeral
To the fond father who hath yielded up
His own sweet child. Claudia, thy love, thy duty,
Thy very name, is gone. Thou art another's;
Thou hast a master now; and I have thrown
My precious pearl away. Yet men who give
A living daughter to the fickle will
Of a capricious bridegroom, laugh—the madmen!
Laugh at the jocund bridal feast, and weep
When the fair corse is laid in blessed rest,
Deep, deep in mother earth. Oh, happier, far,
So to have lost my child!

Cla. Father!

Ang. Thou hast gained
A son, not lost a daughter.

Rie. Love her, Angelo;
Be kind to her as I have been; defend her,
Cherish her, love her.

Ang. More than life.
(*Hands Claudia to the throne, and sits by her.*

Rie. Bring mirth—
Music, and dance, and song, and I will laugh,
And chase away these images of death
That float afore mine eyes. A song—a song!

Sav. (*To Ursini.*) Thou shouldst have named the masque.

Urs. (*To Savelli.*) Better anon.

SONG.

Hail to the gentle bride! the dove
High nested in the column's crest!
Oh, welcome as the bird of love
Who bore the olive-sign of rest!

Cho. Hail to the bride!

Hail to the gentle bride! the flower
Whose garlands round the column twine!
Oh! fairer than the citron bower!
More fragrant than the blossom'd vine!

Cho. Hail to the bride!

Hail to the gentle bride! the star
Whose radiance o'er the column beams!
Oh, soft as moonlight, seen afar,
A silver shine on trembling streams!

Cho. Hail to the bride!

Rie. A pleasant strain!
(*A citizen rushes from amongst the attendants, and presents a paper to Rienzi.*
What wouldst thou, friend?

Cit. May it please thee
To read this scroll, great Tribune.

Urs. (*To Colonna.*) Can the demon,
To whom his soul is pledged, have ta'en this way
To show our secret? No, he smiles! he smiles!
His hand shakes not! I breathe again.

Rie. (*To Citizen.*) Fair sir,
All thou hast asked is granted. [*Exit Citizen.*
'T is no day
To frown on a petition. Mirth, my lords—
Bring mirth! I brook no pause of revelry.
Have ye no masque?

Sav. (*To Ursini.*) He rushes in the toils;
Now weave the meshes round him.

Urs. Sooth, my lord,
We had plotted to surprise the gentle bride
With a slight dance—a toy, an antic.

Rie. Ay,
And when?

Urs. Soon as the bell tolled four, the masquers
Were bid to enter.

Rie. Four? And how attired?
Urs. Turban'd and robed, and with swart visages,
A troop of lusty Moors.
Rie. Camillo, hark! Admit these revellers;
Mark me—

(*Gives orders in low voice to Camillo, and also the paper which he has just received from the citizen.*

Urs. (*Aside.*) Now, vengeance, thou art mine!
Rie. Wine—wine! (*To an attendant.*
Fill me a goblet high with sparkling wine!

(*The attendant fills a goblet, and presents it to Rienzi.*

Fill high, my noble guests. Claudia Rienzi,
And Angelo Colonna! Bless'd be they
And we in their fair union! Doubly cursed
Whoe'er in wish or thought would loose that tie,
The bond of peace to Rome! Drink, good my lords,
Fill high the mantling wine, and in the bowl
Be all unkindness buried!
Urs. Heartily
We pledge you, noble Tribune. (*All rise except Colonna.*
Rie. Why, Colonna!
Brother!—(*Colonna rises.*) He startles at the word.
He eyes
The cup as it were poisoned. Dost thou think
We 've drugged the draught? I 'll be thy taster.—
Drink!
The wine is honest—we're no traitors!
Urs. Drink!
I pr'ythee, drink!
Col. Health to the gentle bride!
Health to my children!
Rie. This is fatherly;
Noble Colonna, this is princely. Now,
If any scorn thee, Claudia, say Colonna,
Whose word is truth, hailed thee his child.
Cla. My lords
And kinsmen all, if a poor simple maid,
And yet Rienzi's daughter, so may dare
To call ye, take my thanks. On every head
Be every fair wish trebled. Gentle friends—

(*Rises to go, attended by Angelo, and followed by the Ladies.*

Rie. Wilt thou not wait the masque?

[*Exeunt Claudia, Angelo, and Ladies.*

Thou wilt not. Well!
We must carouse the deeper. Hark, Francisco!
Go bid the fountains, from their marble mouths,
Pour the rich juice of the Sicilian grape,
A flood of molten rubies, that our kind
And drouthy fellow-citizens may chorus
Hail to the gentle bride. I would fain bid
Old Tyber flow with wine. Another cup—
To thee and thine, Colonna! fill the bowl,
Higher and higher! Let the phantom, fear—
And doubt, that haunts round princes—and suspicion,
That broods a harpy o'er the banquet—flee
Down to the uttermost depths of hell. A health
To thee and thine, Colonna!
Urs. Of what doubt
Speaks our great Tribune?
Rie. A fit tale of mirth,
To crown the goblet!

Enter the Masquers.

Doubt! Spake I of doubt?
Fear! Said I fear? So fenced around by friends,
Allies, and kinsmen, what have I to fear
From treason or from traitors! Say yon band
Were rebels, ye would guard me! Call them murderers,
Ye would avenge me.
Urs. Ay, by death.
Rie. And thou?
Col. By death!
Rie. Seize the foul traitors. Ye have passed
(*To the Masquers, who seize the Nobles, &c.*
Your own just sentence. Yield, my masters, yield!
Your men are overpowered; your masquers chained;
The courts are lined with guards, and at one stroke—
One touch upon this bell, the strength of Rome,
All that hath life within the walls, will rise
To crush ye. Yield your swords. Do ye not shame
To wear them? Yield your swords.

Re-enter Angelo.

Ang. Rienzi,
(*Then to one of the guards, who seizes Colonna.*
Villain!
An thou but touch the Lord Colonna—ay,
An thou but dare to lay thy ruffian hand
Upon his garment—
Rie. Seize his sword.
Ang. Again!
Art frenetic, Rienzi!
Rie. Seek of them.
Ang. Father, in mercy speak! Give me a cause;
And, though a legion hemmed thee in, thy son
Should rescue thee. Speak but one word, dear father,
Only one word! Sure as I live, thou art guiltless;
Sure as the sun tracks his bright path in heaven,
Thy course is pure. Yet speak!
Rie. He is silent.
Ang. Speak.
Rie. Doth not that silence answer thee? Look on them.
Thou know'st them, Angelo—the bold Savelli,
The Frangipani, and the Ursini—
Ay, and the high Colonna; well thou knowest
Each proud and lofty visage; mark them now.
They should be signed as Cain, of old, for guilt—
Detected, baffled, murderous guilt, hath set
His bloody hand upon them. Son, thou shudderest!
Their tawny masquers should have slain me; here,
Before my daughter's eyes; here, at thy bridal;
Here, in my festive hour—the mutual cup
Sparkling; the mutual pledge half spoke; the bread,
Which we have broke together, unconsumed
Upon the board; joyful and full of wine;
Sinful and unconfessed—so had I fallen;
And so—the word was death. From their own lips
Came their own righteous sentence—death!
Ang. Oh, mercy!
Mercy! Thou liv'st. 'T was but the intent.——

Rie. My death
Were nothing; but through me, the traitors struck
At peace, at liberty, at Rome—my country,
Bright and regenerate, the world's mistress once,
And doomed, like the old fabled bird, to rise
Strong from her ashes. Did ye think the people
Could spare their Tribune? Did ye deem them weary
Of equal justice; and mild law; and freedom
As liberal as the air; and mighty fame,
A more resplendent sun? Sirs, I am guarded
By the invisible shield of love, which blunts
The darts of treachery. I cannot die,
Whilst Rome commands me, live. For ye, foul traitors,
I pardon ye, and I despise ye. Go!
Ye are free.

Ang. (*To Rienzi.*) Oh, thanks, my father.

Col. Said he thanks!
Chains, bring me chains! such words from such a tongue
Were slavery worse than death. Chains—chains—

Rie. Ye are free.

Col. Is the proud pillar of Colonna fallen,
That base plebeian feet bestride its shaft?
Is Ursini's strong bear muzzled and chained,
That every cur—

Sav. Good cousin, pr'ythee peace;
The Tribune means us fairly.

Rie. Still ye are free.
Yet mark me, signors! Tame your rebel bloods;
Be faithful subjects to the good estate;
Demolish your strong towers, which overtop
Our beautiful city with barbarian pride,
Loosing fell rapine, discord, and revenge,
From out their dens accurst. Be quiet subjects,
And ye shall find the state a gentle mistress—
Else—

Col. Doth he threaten!

Urs. Hush! this is no time—
An hour will come——

Rie. What, do you mutter, traitors;
Follow me instant to the Lateran.
There at the holy altar, with such rites,
As to profane were sin more damnable
Than treason ever dared, to offer up
Your vowed allegiance to freed Rome—to me,
Her servant, minister, deliverer—me,
Your master. Ye are free; but I will chain
Your rebel souls with oaths. Follow me, sirs.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Capitoline Hill.

Enter Ursini and Frangipani.

Fra. Nay, Ursini, why pluck me by the sleeve?
Why steal from the procession? Why re-waken
The tyrant's anger?

Urs. For revenge! Ye are stunned,
Bewildered, as men rousing from a dream,
That know not where they stand. Dost thou not see
Our great revenge is sure? The tyrant walks
Blinded by his vainglory; confident
In that straw fetter, an extorted oath;
And we—why are we not resolved? And be not
Our bold retainers waiting armed in proof,
Without the gates of Rome? What, if to-night——

Fra. This very hour. Our tried and hardy band,
Led by the chivalry of Rome, could carry
The city at a charge; and Rome herself
Will rise against the madman.

Urs. Here comes one,
Whose name were worth a host. Didst thou not mark,
How, stung by the sharp scorn Rienzi flung
On proud Colonna, the young bridegroom broke
From his new father's side?

Enter Angelo.

Urs. Lord Angelo,
A truant from this pageant?

Ang. As thou see'st.

Urs. Yet thy good father, our great Tribune——

Ang. Sir,
I am a son of the Colonna.

Urs. Ay,
The heir of that most princely house; and, sir,
Fair though she be, a friend must frankly wish
She owned another sire.

Ang. No more! no more!

Enter Savelli and Cafarello.

Ang. How pass'd the ceremonial, Count? Beseech thee,
Tell us of these new rites.

Sav. The noble train
Rolled smoothly on. Rienzi led the band
Right royally, sceptred and robed, and backing
A milk-white Arab, from whose eyeballs flashed
Quick gleams of glittering light. Colonna held
The bridle-rein.

Ang. Stephen Colonna?

Sav. Ay—
Thy father, sir. We meaner barons walked
Behind, bareheaded, and with folded arms,
As men doing penance to the holy shrine
Of St. John Lateran. Then came a mummery
Of oaths to that indefinite she, the State—
Republic, sir, is out of date—and then——

Caf. Ay, tell that impious outrage.

Sav. Then Rienzi,
Stepping before the altar, his bold hand
Laid on the consecrate Host, sent forth,
In a full pealing voice, that rolled along
The fretted roof, like the loud organ swell,
A rash and insolent summons to the Pope
And Cardinals; next he cited to appear
The imperial rivals, Charles and Lewis; next
The Electors Palatine. Then, whilst the aisles
Of the hushed church prolonged his words, he drew
His dazzling sword, and, waving the bright blade
To the four points of Heaven, cried with a deep
Intensity of will, that drove his words
Like arrows through the brain; "This, too, is mine."
Yes, to each part of this fair earth, he cried—
"Thou, too, art mine."

Ang. Madman! And ye——.

Sav. We listened
In patience and in silence; whilst he stood
His form dilating, and his haughty glance
Instinct with fiery pride.

Ang. Now, by St. John,
Had I been there, ye should have heard a voice
Answer this frenzied summoner.
Urs. Our answer
Is yet unspoken. Angelo Colonna,
If the old glories of thy princely race,
Thy knightly honour, thy fresh budding fame,
Outshine the red and white of Claudia's cheek,
Then——
Ang. Wherefore pause? I know thee, Ursini—
Rienzi's mortal foe, and scarce a friend
To the Colonna; yet, in honour's name—
Say on.
Rie. (*without.*) Lead home the steed. I'll walk from hence.
Urs. Meet me at the Colonna Palace. Fail not.

Enter Rienzi, attended by Colonna and other Lords.

Rie. Ah! he is here. Son! Ye may leave us, lords.
We are content with your good service.
Son, [*Exeunt all but Rienzi and Angelo.*
Methinks this high solemnity might well
Have claimed thy presence. A great ruler's heir
Should be familiar in the people's eyes;
Live on their tongues; take root within their hearts;
Win woman's smiles by honest courtesy,
And force man's tardier praise by bold desert.
So, when the chief shall die, the general love
May hail his successor. But thou—where wast thou?
If with thy bride——
Ang. I have not seen her. Tribune—
Thou wav'st away the word with such a scorn
As I poured poison in thine ear. Already
Dost weary of the title?
Rie. Wherefore should I?
Ang. Thou art ambitious.
Rie. Granted.
Ang. And wouldst be
A king.
Rie. There thou mistak'st. A king! fair son!
Power dwelleth not in sound, and fame hath garlands
Brighter than diadems. I might have been
Anointed, sceptred, crowned; have cast a blaze
Of glory round the old imperial wreath,
The laurel of the Cæsars. But I chose
To master kings, not be one; to direct
The royal puppets as my sovereign will,
And Rome—my Rome decree. Tribune! the Gracchi
Were called so. Tribune! I will make that name
A word of fear to kings.
Ang. Rienzi! Tribune!
Hast thou forgotten—on this very spot,
How thou didst shake the slumbering soul of Rome
With the brave sound of Freedom, till she rose,
And from her giant limbs the shackles dropped,
Burst by one mighty throe? Hadst thou died then,
History had crowned thee with a glorious title—
Deliverer of thy country.
Rie. Well!
Ang. Alas!
When now thou fall'st, as fall thou must, 't will be
The common tale of low ambition. Tyrants
O'erthrown to form a wilder tyranny;
Princes cast down, that thy obscurer house
May rise on nobler ruins.
Rie. Hast thou ended?
I fain would have mistaken thee—hast done?
Ang. No—for, despite thy smothered wrath, the voice
Of warning truth shall reach thee. Thou, to-day,
Hast, by thy frantic sacrilege, drawn on thee
The thunders of the church, the mortal feud
Of either emperor. Here, at home, the barons
Hate, and the people shun thee. Seest thou not,
Even in this noon of pride, thy waning power
Fade, flicker, and wax dim? Thou art as one
Perched on some lofty steeple's dizzy height,
Dazzled by the sun, inebriate by long draughts
Of thinner air; too giddy to look down
Where all his safety lies; too proud to dare
The long descent to the low depth from whence
The desperate climber rose.
Rie. Ay, there 's the sting—
That I, an insect of to-day, outsoar
The reverend worm, nobility! Wouldst shame me
With my poor parentage! Sir, I 'm the son
Of him who kept a sordid hostelry
In the Jews' quarter; my good mother cleansed
Linen for honest hire. Canst thou say worse?
Ang. Can worse be said?
Rie. Add, that my boasted schoolcraft
Was gained from such base toil, gained with such pain
That the nice nurture of the mind was oft
Stolen at the body's cost. I have gone dinnerless
And supperless, the scoff of our poor street,
For tattered vestments and lean hungry looks,
To pay the pedagogue. Add what thou wilt
Of injury. Say that, grown into man,
I 've known the pittance of the hospital,
And, more degrading still, the patronage
Of the Colonna. Of the tallest trees
The roots delve deepest. Yes, I 've trod thy halls,
Scorned and derided 'midst their ribald crew,
A licensed jester, save the cap and bells;
I have borne this—and I have borne the death,
The unavenged death, of a dear brother.
I seemed I was a base ignoble slave.
What am I? Peace, I say! what am I now?
Head of this great republic, chief of Rome;
In all but name, her sovereign; last of all,
Thy father.
Ang. In an evil hour——
Rie. Dar'st thou
Say that? An evil hour for thee, my Claudia!
Thou shouldst have been an emperor's bride, my fairest.
In evil hour thy woman's heart was caught,
By the form moulded as an antique god:
The gallant bearing, the feigned tale of love—
All false, all outward, simulated all.
Ang. But that I loved her, but that I do love her
With a deep tenderness, softer and fonder
Than thy ambition-hardened heart e'er dream'd of,
My sword should answer thee.
Rie. Go to, Lord Angelo;
Thou lov'st her not. Men taunt not, nor defy
The dear one's kindred. A bright atmosphere
Of sunlight and of beauty breathes around
The bosom's idol. I have loved—she loves thee;

And therefore thy proud father—even the shrew,
Thy railing mother, in her eyes, are sacred.
Lay not thy hand upon thy sword, fair son—
Keep that brave for thy comrades. I'll not fight thee.
Go and give thanks to yonder simple bride,
That her plebeian father mews not up,
Safe in the citadel, her noble husband.
Thou art dangerous, Colonna. But, for her,
Beware! (*Going.*

Ang. Come back, Rienzi! Thus I throw
A brave defiance in thy teeth. (*Throws down his glove.*

Rie. Once more,
Beware.

Ang. Take up the glove!

Rie. This time for her— (*Takes up the glove.*
For her dear sake—come, to thy bride! home! home!

Ang. Dost fear me, tribune of the people!

Rie. Fear!
Do I fear thee! Tempt me no more. This once,
Home to thy bride! [*Exit.*

Ang. Now, Ursini, I come—
Fit partner of thy vengeance! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

A Hall in the Colonna Palace.

Enter Ursini, Stephen Colonna, Lady Colonna, Savelli, Frangipani, and Nobles.

Lady C. Five thousand horsemen at the gates of Rome,
And armed retainers in each house, and knights
Harness'd in glittering mail; with banner proud,
And trump and war-cry, hurling their bright spears
At the usurper's head! Why, now I know ye,
My gallant kinsmen. When ye crouched, like hounds,
Beneath the tyrant's lash; or stealthily,
At midnight meetings, and below your breath,
Muttered of murders—the quick poniard stroke—
The calculated poison, that consumes
So much of life a day—or that mute slayer,
The Eastern bow-string—chivalry of Rome,
What marvel that I knew ye not, distained
With such base purpose. Now ye have clothed death
In the brave guise of war, and made him gay
And lovely as a bridegroom. Speed ye forth!
Away! the sun is low! Ye have a city
To win, ere night!

Col. Better await the night:
And then, in darkness and in storm, at once
Crush the stunn'd Tribune.

Lady C. Dost thou say await,
Stephen Colonna? Dost thou seek the veil
Of darkness for a deed of light? On, on!
Whilst yet the sunbeams kiss the glittering stream
Of armed knights and barbed steeds. On, on!
Whilst yet the column'd banners of our house
May catch their parting glory, as the peaks
Of highest Alps shine o'er the twilight world.

Urs. The lady counsels well. In every street
Stand knots of citizens in sad debate
Of their proud ruler's phrenzy; I have sent
Bold tongues amongst them, madam——

Enter Angelo.

Col. Lo! thy son.

Lady C. Sir, since he called Rienzi's daughter wife,
I have no son!

Ang. Oh, mother, say not so!
Savelli! Ursini! ye bade me hither
With broken phrase and solemn tone, and pause
Of mighty import. Good my lords, I come
To read your mystery. The city 's full
Of camp-like noises; tramp of steeds, and clash
Of mail, and trumpet blast, and ringing clang
Of busy armourers; the grim ban-dog bays;
The champing war-horse in his stall neighs loud;
The vulture shrieks aloft. Ye are still leagued
Against Rienzi.

Urs. Wouldst betray—

Ang. Betray!
Why, I am spurned, derided, scorned, cast off,
As a child's broken toy. Betray! I come
To join ye. Ay, dear mother, to pull down
The haughty tyrant from his throne, or fall
As may beseem thy son. Angels and saints,
Bear witness to my oath!

Sav. I do believe thee
With a most constant faith. On thy clear brow
Honour and victory sit crowned.

Ang. Oh put me
To the proof, my lords! Why stay we here? Good father,
Think'st thou suspicion's straining eye-balls sleep,
Or that the watcher, Doubt, hath lost her keen
And delicate sense of sound? We must forerun
The tyrant's fear. Follow me, ye that love
The joy of glorious battle!

Lady C. Angelo—

Ang. Nay, when the fight is won. Then thou shalt dew
My laurels with glad tears. Stay me not now.

Lady C. Bear to the fight thy mother's blessing, boy—
Her proud and joyful blessing, not her tears.
Thou art the last of all my children, Angelo—
Dearest and last. Unkindness never came
Betwixt us twain, save once. But, had I sons
As many and as brave as that old queen
Who mourned her Troy in ashes, I would peril
Each several warrior in this cause as freely
As thou, my one fair boy. Now speed thee forth,
To conquest or to death. Why lingerest thou,
My Angelo?

Ang. Mother!

Lady C. What wouldst thou?

Ang. Claudia!

Lady C. *His* daughter!

Ang. Poor, poor Claudia! I have left her,
Even on our bridal-day. But, if I fall—
Mother!

Lady C. Fie! fie! his daughter! Speed thee forth
To battle! on, brave kinsmen! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

An apartment in the Capitol.

Enter Rienzi, and Claudia.

Cla. Father!
At last I find thee, father!
Rie. Well, my child!
What wouldst thou?
Cla. Nay, I know not. Be the guests
Departed?
Rie. Yes.
Cla. All gone; and wherefore went ye
To the Lateran, dear father? And where loiters—
Rie. Aspic!
Cla. Methought a bridal should be merrier—
Not merrier, but happier. Angelo!
Rie. Oh, foulest ingrate! when I wed thy mother—
Oh, fiend accursed!
Cla. Nay, nay—perchance he 's gone
To crave his mother's blessing. Is 't not strange
That I should love so well who loves not me?
But I have felt a yearning of the heart
Toward that majestic lady, which hath reached
Almost to painfulness. If I should kneel
Before her and implore her grace—
Rie. Thou'dst find
Such welcome as the mountain cat might yield
To the dappled fawn; such greeting as the wolf
To the curled lamb.
Cla. Oh! she would love me, father,
Even for the prideful love of Angelo,
That woke her hatred first. A mother joys
To tell fond legends of her children; who,
Like me, would listen, with unwearied ear,
To tales of Angelo, and call for more;
And when her store was ended, cry again;
And every day, and all day long, be fed
With praise of that dear name? Why dost thou
groan?
Rie. A scorpion stung me.
Cla. Kill it, father—kill it,
Before it sting again.
Rie. Alas, alas!
I 'll think of him no more.

Enter Camillo, followed by Alberti.

Camillo, speak!
Thy breathless speed, and pallid cheeks, have told
A world of news already. Quick, Alberti!
Thy tidings, man—thy tidings!
Alb. Good my lord,
Rome is begirt with foes. The barons lead
Their vassals—every palace voids a horde
Of armed retainers.
Rie. By our Lady's name,
I have not heard so glad a sound, since that
Which hailed me Tribune of the people! What!
These masking murderers turned to warrior knights?
Their mine of treason sprung! Now we shall work
In daylight. Toll the bell—summon the guards!
Sweet, to thy chamber! (*To Claudia.*
Cla. Angelo!
Alb. He leads
The rebel force.
Cla. 'T is false!
Alb. I would it were.
Cla. Thou liest—he is no rebel. Whom he leads,
Are friends to aid the Tribune. Be they not,
Camillo? Speak, old man. Be they not friends?
Cam. Alas! sweet lady.
Cla. Go not forth, dear father—
They lie—be sure they lie—yet go not forth!
Stay here with me! Avoid him—stay with me!
Leave me not here alone!
Rie. Peace, peace!
Cla. I 'll meet him,
Armed or unarmed, as friend or foe, I 'll fly
To meet Lord Angelo. I am his wife—
His own true wife. [*Exit.*
Rie. Entice her to her chamber,
And watch that she escape not. [*Exit Camillo.*
Now, good captain,
Let the great bell, with loud and hasty tongue,
Summon the people, and with trumpet-sound
Collect the scattered guard. Be they all faithful?
Alb. I 'll answer for them with my life.
Rie. What, ho!
My armour! See that Saladin be barbed
Complete in mail. By heaven, there is a joy
In fronting these proud nobles—they who deem
Man valiant by descent.
Alb. Shall we not send
To guard the city gates?
Rie. To fling them wide!
Let the weak timid hare and wily fox
Fence their dank earthy holes—the lion's den
Is open. We will fight for Rome and freedom.
Here, in Rome's very streets, beside the hearths
Of the freed citizens, the household gods
Worshipped in every faith. Fling wide the gates!
I 'll follow on the instant. Ho, my armour!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the Capitol.

Rienzi, seated at a table, Camillo and Alberti, discovered in the front.

Alb. My Lord, Rienzi. (*Rienzi motions them to be silent.*
Cam. See, he waves thee off.
Trouble him not, Alberti—he is chafed,
Moody, and fierce, as though this victory,
Which drove the noble mutineers before ye,
As stag-hounds chase a herd of deer, had ended
In blank defeat.
Alb. The Tribune bore him bravely,
And we are victors. Yet the storm is hush'd,
Not spent. When, after this wild night of war,
The sun arose, he showed a troubled scene
Of death and disarray; a doubtful flight,

A wavering triumph. Even at the gate
Savelli re-collects his scattered band;
The people falter; and the soldiery
Mutter low curses as they fight, and yearn
For their old leaders. His hot pride—yet, sooth,
He bore him gallantly. Beneath his sword
Fell the dark plotter, Ursini.

Cam. How fared
The bold Colonna?

Alb. The old valiant chief,
With many a younger pillar of that high
And honoured house, lies dead.

Cam. And Angelo?

Alb. A prisoner. As he knelt beside the corse
Of his brave father, without word or blow,
As easily as an o'er-wearied child,
We seized him.

Cam. Lo! the Tribune.

Rie. (*rising and advancing.*) Now admit
Your prisoners; we would see them. Thou, Camillo,
Summon the headsman, and prepare the court
For sudden execution.

Alb. (*turning back.*) If a true
And faithful servant of the good estate—
If thine old friend, great Tribune—

Rie. Hark ye, sir!
The difficult duty of supreme command
Rests on my head. Obedience is thy light
And easy task—obedience swift and blind,
As yonder sword, death's sharp-edged instrument,
My faithful servant, an' thou wilt, my friend,
Owes to this strong right hand.
Look that the headsman
Be ready presently. The prisoners!

[*Exeunt Alberti and Camillo.*

Ay,
Even this poor simple remnant of the wars
Can lead their fickle purpose. Abject changelings!
Base huggers of their chains! Methought, to-day,
These Roman Helots would have crouched i' the dust
At sound of their old masters' whips. I have been
Too easy with the slaves. Terror, not love,
Strikes anchor in ignoble souls. These prisoners,
Why could they not have died, as die they shall?
Was there no lance, no soldier's glorious way
To let out life, but they must wait the slow
And shameful axe? Yet Angelo—

Enter Alberti, with Angelo, Frangipani, Cafarello, and other Lords—Prisoners guarded.

Alb. My lord,
The prisoners!

Rie. Bring them to the light. The prisoners!
The noble prisoners! I have seen ye, sirs,
Before, at Claudia's bridal—you, and you,
The Frangipani, and the Ursini—
Ay, and the high Colonna; my allies,
My friends, my subjects; ye who swore to me
Allegiance at the altar; ye for whom
One harlot sin is not enough—who pile,
Adulterate in crime, treason on murder,
And perjury on treason! Hence! begone!
Ye know your doom.

Fra. And fear it not.

Rie. To death! (*Going.*
To instant death. Hold! here is one. Lord Angelo,
How shall I call thee, son or traitor?

Ang. Foe.
I know no father, save the valiant dead
Who lives behind a rampart of his slain
In warlike rest. I bend before no king,
Save the dread Majesty of heaven. Thy foe,
Thy mortal foe, Rienzi.

Rie. Well! my foe.
Thou hast seen me fling a pardon free as air,
To foemen crouching at my feet; hast seen
The treachery that paid me. I have lost
My faith in man's bold eye—his earnest voice,
The keen grasp of his hand, the speech where truth
Seems gushing in each ardent word. I have known
So many false, that, as a mariner
Escaped from shipwreck, in a summer sea,
Sparkling with gentle life, sees but the rocks
On which his vessel struck; so I, in the bright
And most majestic face of man, can read
Nought but a smiling treason. Yet thou, Angelo—
Thou art not all a lie! If I should trust—

Ang. Sir, I shall not deceive thee. Mark, Rienzi!
If thou release me—'t is the thought that works
Even now within thy brain—before yon sun
Reach the hot west, the war-cry of Colonna
Shall sweep once more thy streets. Then, stern revenge,
Or smiling death!

Rie. Madman!

Ang. Wouldst have me live—
Thou who hast levelled to the earth the pride
Of my old, princely race? My kinsmen lie
Scattered and fallen in the highway; and he,
The stateliest pillar of our house, my father,
Stephen Colonna—oh! the very name—
The bright ancestral name, which as a star
Pointed to glory, fell into eclipse
When my brave father died!

Rie. I spared him once;
Spared for a second treason. And again—

Ang. Sir, he is dead. If thou wouldst show me grace,
Lay me beside him in the grave.

Rie. And Claudia—
Thy virgin bride!

Ang. Alas! alas, for thee,
Sweet wife! Yet thou art pure as the white clouds
That sail around the moon; thy home is heaven—
There we shall meet again; here we are parted
For ever.

Rie. Wherefore?

Ang. She is thy daughter.

Rie. Boy!
Proud abject minion of a name, a sound;
Think'st thou to beard me thus! thou hast thy will.
Away with them! Dost hear me, dallying slave?
Off with the prisoners.

Alb. All, my lord?

Rie. With all. (*Throwing himself into a chair.*

Ang. For this I thank thee. Bear one fond farewell
To Claudia. Tell her, that my latest prayer

Shall blend her name with mine. For thee, Rienzi,
Tremble! a tyrant's rule is brief.
[*Exeunt Alberti, Angelo, &c.*
Rie. (*rises and advances.*) They are gone,
And my heart's lightened; how the traitor stood
Looking me down with his proud eye, disdaining
Fair mercy—making of the hideous block
An altar—of unnatural ghastly death
A god. He hath his will; and I—my heart
Is tranquil.
Cla. (*without.*) Father! Father!
Rie. Guard the door! [*Looking out.*
Be sure ye give not way.
Cla. (*without.*) Father!
Rie. To see
Her looks! her tears!

Enter Claudia, hastily.

Cla. Who dares to stop me? Father!
(*Rushes into the arms of Rienzi.*
Rie. I bade ye guard the entrance.
Cla. Against mé!
Ye must have men and gates of steel to bar
Claudia from her dear father. Where is he?
They said that he was with you—he—thou know'st
Whom I would say. I heard ye loud. I thought
I heard ye; but, perchance, the dizzying throb
Of my poor temples—Where is he? I see
No corse—an' he were dead—Oh, no, no, no!
Thou couldst not, wouldst not! Say he lives.
Rie. As yet
He lives.
Cla. Oh! blessings on thy heart, dear father!
Blessings on thy kind heart! When shall I see him?
Is he in prison? Fear hath made we weak,
And wordless as a child. Oh! send for him.
Thou hast pardoned him; didst thou not say but now
Thou hadst pardoned him?
Rie. No.
Cla. Oh, thou hast! thou hast!
This is the dalliance thou wast wont to hold
When I have craved some girlish boon—a bird,
A flower, a moonlight walk; but now I ask thee
Life, more than life. Thou hast pardoned him?
Rie. My Claudia!
Cla. Ay! I am thine own Claudia, whose first word
Was father! These are the same hands that clung
Around thy knees, a tottering babe; the lips
That, ere they had learnt speech, would smile, and seek
To meet thee with an infant's kiss; the eyes
Thou hast called so like my mother's; eyes that never
Gazed on thee, but with looks of love. Oh, pardon!
Nay, father, speak not yet; thy brows are knit
Into a sternness. Pr'ythee, speak not yet!
Rie. This traitor—
Cla. Call him as thou wilt, but pardon;
Oh, pardon! [*Kneels.*
Rie. He defies me.
Cla. See, I kneel,
And he shall kneel, shall kiss thy feet; wilt pardon?
Rie. Mine own dear Claudia.
Cla. Pardon!
Rie. Raise thee up;
Rest on my bosom; let thy beating heart
Lie upon mine; so shall the mutual pang
Be stilled. Oh! that thy father's soul could bear
This grief for thee, my sweet one! Oh, forgive—
Cla. Forgive thee what? 'Tis so the headsman speaks
To his poor victim, ere he strikes. Do fathers
Make widows of their children? send them down
To the cold grave heart-broken? Tell me not
Of fathers—I have none! All else that breathes
Hath known that natural love. The wolf is kind
To her vile cubs; the little wren hath care
For each small youngling of her brood; and thou—
The word that widowed, orphaned me? Henceforth
My home shall be his grave; and yet thou canst not—
Father! (*Rushing into Rienzi's arms.*
Rie. Ay!
Dost call me father, once again my Claudia?
Mine own sweet child!
Cla. Oh, father, pardon him!
Oh, pardon! pardon! 'Tis my life I ask
In his. Our lives, dear father!
Rie. Ho, Camillo!
Where loiters he? (*Enter Camillo.*
Camillo, take my ring;
Fly to the captain of the guard, Alberti;
Bid him release Lord Angelo.
Cla. Now bless thee—
Bless thee, my father!
Rie. Fly, Camillo, fly!
Why loiterest thou?
Cam. The ring.
(*Rienzi gives the ring to Camillo—Exit Camillo.*
Cla. Give me the ring.
Whose speed may match with mine? Let me be first
To speak those gracious words of pardon.
Rie. No!
That were no place for thee.
Cla. I should see nought
But him! whilst old Camillo—Oh, I hear
His weary footfall still! I should have been
In Angelo's arms ere now. (*Bell sounds.*) Hark, hark, the bell!
Rie. It is the bell that thou so oft hast heard
Summoning the band of liberty—the bell
That pealed its loud triumphant note, and raised
Its mighty voice with such a mastery
Of glorious power, as if the spirit of sound
That dwells in the viewless wind, and walks the waves
Of the chafed sea, and rules the thunder cloud
That shrouded him in that small orb, to spread
Tidings of freedom to the nations. Now
It tells of present peril.
Cla. Say, of death.
Oh, father, every stroke thrills through my veins,
Swaying the inmost pulses of my heart
As swings the deep vibration. 'Tis the knell—
Rie. My child,
Have I not said that he shall live?
Cla. Then stop
That bell. The dismal note beats on me, father,
As from a thousand echoes; mixed with groans,
And shrieks, and moanings in the air. Dost hear them?

Dost hear, again? Be those screams real, father?
Or of the gibbering concerts that salute
The newly mad?

Rie. Be calmer, sweet. I heard
A shriek—a woman's shriek. Calm thee, my child.

Enter Lady Colonna.

Lady C. He 's dead. He 's dead!

Rie. It is her husband, Claudia;
Stephen Colonna.

Lady C. Murderer, 't is my son,
(*Claudia sinks at her father's feet.*
My husband died in honoured fight; for him
I weep not.

Rie. Angelo is pardoned, Claudia.

Lady C. He is dead. I saw the axe, fearfully bright,
Wave o'er his neck with an edgy shine that cut
My burning eye-balls; saw the butcher stroke,
And the hot blood gush like a fountain high,
From out the veins; and then I heard a voice
Cry pardon! heard a shout that chorused pardon!
Pardon! to that disjoined corse! Oh, deep
And horrible mockery! So the fiends shall chaunt
Round thy tormented soul, and pardon, pardon,
Ring through the depths of hell.

Rie. Claudia, my sweet one,
Look up—speak to me! Writhe not thus, my Claudia,
Shivering about my feet.

Lady C. Claudia Colonna!
They say that grief is proud; but I will own thee.
Now, my fair daughter, rouse thee—help me curse
Him who hath slain thy husband.

Rie. Woman, fiend,
Thou kill'st my child—avaunt!

Lady C. When I have said
Mine errand. Think'st thou I came here to crush
Yon feeble worm? Thou hast done that! She loved him,
Fair, faithful wretch, and thou—Why I could laugh
At such a vengeance! Thy keen axe, that hewed
My column to the earth, struck down the weed
That crept around its base.

Rie. Claudia! she moves!
She is not dead.

Lady C. Dead! Why, the dead are blessed,
And she is blasted. Dead! the dead lie down
In peace, and she shall pine a living ghost
About thee, with pale looks and patient love,
And bitter gusts of anguish, that shall cross
The gentle spirit, when poor Angelo—
A widow's and a childless mother's curse
Rest on thy head, Rienzi! Live, till Rome
Hurl thee from thy proud seat; live but to prove
The ecstasy of scorn, the fierce contempt
That wait the tyrant fallen; then die, borne down
By mighty justice! die as a wild beast
Before the hunters! die, and leave a name
Portentous, bloody, brief—a meteor name,
Obscurely bad, or madly bright! My curse
Rest on thy head, Rienzi.

Rie. Help, there! help, Camillo!

Enter Camillo.

Rie. Ay, I know thou wast too late. Bring aid.
See, see!
Her lips are colouring fast—she is not dead.
Bring aid.

Cam. My lord, Savelli, with a power
Gathering in every street, comes on; the guards
Flee, and the people hear the bell, nor flock
To aid or rescue.

Lady C. Now, revenge, revenge!
Savelli! Murderer, when next we meet,
Thou shalt give blood for blood. [*Exit.*

Rie. She lives! Aid, aid!
Her pulses beat again. Go, call her maids;
Speed thee, Camillo! [*Exit Camillo.*
How shall I endure
The unspoken curses of her eye? how bear
Her voice? My child, my child! my beautiful—
Whom I so loved; whom I have murdered! Claudia,
Mine own beloved child! She would have given
Her life for mine. Would I were dead!

Re-enter Camillo, with Ladies and Attendants, who recover and bear off Claudia, from her father.

Cam. My lord—

Rie. Camillo, when I 'm gone, be faithful to her—
Be very faithful. Save her, shield her, better
Than I, that was her father. She 'll not trouble thee
Long, good Camillo; the sure poison, grief,
Rankles in those young veins. Yet cherish her—
She loved thee.

Cam. My dear master—thou, thyself—

Rie. My business is to die. Watch o'er my child;
And, soon as I am dead, conduct her safely
To the small nunnery of the Ursulines,
Her pious steps so often sought. Away!
[*Exit Camillo.*
She will not curse me dead—she 'll pray for me,
In that poor broken heart. Oh, blessings on thee,
My child—mine own sweet child!

Enter Alberti.

Alb. My lord, Savelli
Comes on apace.

Rie. Summon the people.

Alb. They, too,
Advance against thee.

Rie. And for such I left
The assured condition of my lowliness—
The laughing days, the peaceful nights, the joys
Of a small quiet home; for such I risked
Thy peace, my daughter. Abject, crouching slaves!
False, fickle, treacherous, perjured slaves! how come they?
How led, how armed, how number'd?

Alb. They sweep on,
A thickening cloud, as locusts, when they light
On the green banks of Nile. The furious mother
Leads them, and claims revenge, in her fierce prayers
And frantic imprecations.

Rie. 'Tis the fiend
That speediest answers to the daring call
Of his mad worshippers. So be it.

Alb. Some mix with their shouts the name
Of mighty Liberty.
Rie. Oh, had I laid
All earthly passion, pride, and pomp, and power,
And high ambition, and hot lust of rule,
Like sacrificial fruits, upon the altar
Of Liberty, divinest Liberty—
Then—but the dream that filled my soul was vast
As is his whose mad ambition thinned the ranks
Of the Seraphim, and peopled hell. These slaves!
Base crawling reptiles—may the curse of chains
Cling to them ever. Seek the court, Alberti—
Dismiss the guard—unbar the gates. I'll seek
The people.
Alb. Singly?
Rie. Singly, sir. [*Exeunt Alberti and Rienzi.*

SCENE II.

Before the Gates of the Capitol.

Enter Lady Colonna, Savelli, Soldiers, and Citizens.

Lady C. Come on! Why loiter ye? Ye that have sons,
Ye that have known a mother's love, come on;
A woman leads to vengeance.
First Cit. Say, to justice.
Sav. Look, look, the gates are barred. The Tribune means
To stand a desperate siege. Bring axes, sirs,
And fire. Consume the palace! hew the doors!
Bring torches!
Lady C. Ay, with mine own hand I'll light
The accurst and murderous den; thy funeral pyre,
My Angelo.
Sav. Bring torches! hew the gates!
Citizens. Down with the tyrant—drag him forth—
Rienzi! [*The gates are opened—Rienzi appears.*
Rie. Who calls upon Rienzi? Citizens,
What seek ye of your Tribune?
Lady C. Give me back
My son.
Rie. Oh, that grim Death would give him back
To Claudia! But the cold, cold grave—why come ye?
Second Cit. For vengeance, perjured tyrant—for thy blood—
For liberty.
Rie. For liberty! Go seek
Earth's loftiest heights, and ocean's deepest caves,
Go where the sea-snake and the eagle dwell,
'Midst mighty elements—where nature is,
And man is not, and ye may see afar,
Impalpable as a rainbow on the clouds,
The glorious vision! Liberty! I dream'd
Of such a goddess once; dream'd that you slaves
Were Romans, such as ruled the world, and I
Their Tribune. Vain and idle dream! Take back
The symbol and the power. What seek ye more?
First Cit. Tyrant! thy life!
Rie. Come on. Why pause ye, cowards?
I am unarmed. My breast is bare. Why pause ye?

Enter Claudia, through the Gate in the centre of the Flat—Rushes forward to Rienzi.

Cla. Father!
Sav. Oh, save her!
Rie. Drag her from my neck,
If ye be men! Save her! She never harmed
A worm. My Claudia, bless thee! bless thee! Now! now!
(Rienzi falls, pierced by many spears, and the people divide, leaving Claudia stretched on her father's body.
Sav. Ay, that thrust pierced to the heart; he dies
Even whilst I speak.
Cla. Father!
Lady C. Alas! poor child!
Sav. She bleeds, I fear to death. Go bear her in,
And treat the corse with reverence; for surely,
Though stained with much ambition, he was one
Of the earth's great spirits.

CHARLES THE FIRST: AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY.

PREFACE.

Of the Tragedy, considered as a literary production, I shall say little: that is before the reader, and must speak for itself. No one can be more conscious than I am of its numerous defects, and still more numerous deficiencies; but great as those faults may be, they are not the result of negligence or carelessness. It would be the worst of all pedantries, female pedantry, were I to enumerate the very many contemporary writers, the Histories, Memoirs, Narratives, and State Papers, the Roundhead Sermons and Cavalier Ballads from which I have endeavoured to gather not merely an accurate outline of this great event, but those minute and apparently trifling touches which might serve to realize the scene, and supply, by a vivid impression of the people and the time, the usual sources of dramatic attraction, the interest of story and suspense, from which I was cut off by the nature of my subject.

Many of these allusions, those for instance to the papers concealed in the stuffing of the saddle,—to the sowing of the melon-seeds,—to Charles's constant perusal of Shakspeare whilst in prison, so prettily recorded by Milton, and to the falling of the head of the king's staff in the trial scene,—are mentioned by

the best writers, and will be immediately recognized by all who are any ways conversant with the histories of the time.

The anecdote of Lord Broghill (afterwards Earl of Orrery), which really happened at a subsequent period, is less generally known. He was in London on a mission from Charles the Second during the early part of the Protectorate, when Cromwell discovered, confronted, converted, and employed him much in the manner that I have related.

The materials of the scene of signing the warrant, (in which I believe that I have given, from the marking of Marten's cheek to the guiding of Ingoldsby's hand, a very faithful version of what actually occurred,) are chiefly taken from the Defences in the Trials of the Regicides. It is certain that the Judges, after the condemnation, were panic-struck at their own act; and that but for an extraordinary exertion of his singular power over the minds of all with whom he came in contact, Cromwell would never have succeeded in obtaining the signatures of the Commissioners of the High Court of Justice to an instrument essential to the completion of this great national crime, and to the purposes of his own ambition.

I am not aware of having in any material point departed from the truth of History, except in shortening the trial, in bringing the Queen to England, and in assigning to Henrietta the interruption of the sentence, which was actually occasioned by Lady Fairfax; deviations, which were vitally necessary to the effect of the drama. I have some doubts also whether Cromwell did really get rid of Fairfax by dismissing him and Harrison to "seek the Lord together." Hume tells the story confidently; but Hume, although the most delightful, is by no means the most accurate of historians; and the manner in which we are, by the casual mention of contemporary writers, as well as by the evidence on the different trials, enabled to account for almost every instant of Cromwell's time during that eventful morning, goes far in my mind to disprove the circumstance. But the incident is highly dramatic, and so strictly in keeping with the characters of all parties, that I have no scruple in assuming it as a fact. The thing might have happened, if it did not; and that is excuse enough for the dramatist, although not for the historian.

One word more, and I have done. In attempting to delineate the characters of Charles and Cromwell, especially Cromwell, on the success or failure of which the Play must stand or fall, I have to entreat the reader to bear in mind—or I shall seem unjust to the memory of a great man—that the point of time which this Tragedy embraces was precisely that in which the King appeared to the most advantage, "for nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it," and the future Protector to the least. Never throughout his splendid history were the chequered motives and impulses of Cromwell so decidedly evil; never was he so fierce, so cruel, so crafty, so deceitful, so borne along by a low personal ambition, a mere lust of rule, as at that moment. I have endeavoured in the concluding soliloquy to depict the manner in which I believe him to have lulled and quieted his own conscience: but if I had undertaken to portray these remarkable men at any other part of their career, it is certain that my drawing of Charles would have been much less amiable, and that of Cromwell much more so.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Charles the First, *King of England.*
Duke of Gloucester, *his Son, a boy of seven years old.*
Lord Fairfax, *General of the Parliamentary Army.*
Lord Salisbury, Lord Say, Sir Harry Vane, } *Commissioners sent by the Parliament to treat with the King.*
Lord President Bradshaw, Oliver Cromwell, Ireton, Harrison, Downes, Marten, Tichburne, } *Judges appointed by the Commons to try the King.*
Cook, *Solicitor to the Commons.*
Pride, *an Officer in the Parliamentary Army.*
Hacker, *Colonel of the Guard.*
Sir Thomas Herbert, *a Gentleman attending on the King.*
Hammond, *Governor of the Isle of Wight.*
Sentinel.
Servant, *belonging to Cromwell.*
Bishop, Commissioners, Judges, Officers, Soldiers, &c.

Henrietta Maria, *Queen of England.*
Princess Elizabeth, *a Girl of Twelve.*
Lady Fairfax.

Scene. — London, *except during the latter part of the First Act, when it is laid in the* Isle of Wight.

CHARLES THE FIRST.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in Whitehall.

Enter Ireton, Harrison, and Pride, to Downes and Marten.

Downes. Welcome to London, Ireton! dearly welcome
To fair Whitehall! Harrison! Pride! Where loiters
The valiant General?
Ireton. He alighted with us
Three hours agone.
Marten. What, three hours here, and still
In harness! Know ye not your coat of mail
Is out of date? Go, doff your armour quick,

Provide ye civil suits, grave civil suits,
Sad reverend civil suits.
Pride. What mean'st thou?
Dow. Seek
Meaning of Harry Marten! Tush! Where tarries
The pious Cromwell?
Ire. He is busied still
Disposing the tired soldiery.
Mar. Disbanding
Will be his business soon. The lubbard people
And the smug citizens, are grown aweary
Of this rough war. Ye must learn gentler trades,
If ye would thrive. Peace is the cry, my masters;
Peace and the King!
Dow. The Newport treaty speeds;
So far is sure.
Harrison. But we bring victory
To the good cause. Cromwell hath passed careering
From hold to hold, sweeping as with a besom
The foul malignants from the land. The North
Is ours from sea to sea.
Dow. 'T is a brave leader;
But peace is ever the best victory.

Enter Cromwell.

Mar. In good time comes the General. Valiant Cromwell,
Thy praise was on our lips.
Cromwell. Not mine! not mine!
Praise to the Lord of Hosts, whose mighty shield
Bucklered us in the battle; whose right arm
Strengthened us when we smote! Praise to the Lord!
For his poor instruments, the meanest soldier
Doth his great duty; we no more. My masters,
Have ye no news astir? News, the prime staple
Of yonder tattling city?
Mar. Ay; the worst
Is that the Commons grow from day to day
More doubtful of the army, more possessed
By canting presbyters.
Ire. Name not the Commons,
A jealous crew, whose envious hate descends
'Twixt every pause of fear on us, their loathed,
Despised defenders. Were there but one head
To the whole army, they would turn to truth
An elder tyrant's wish, and chop it off.
Despots who prate of liberty!—
Har. Worse! worse!
A godless yet intolerant crew, who rear
O'er the down-fallen Church that blacker idol,
A conscience-fettering Presbytery.
Crom. Sir,
They shall be quelled. Power, howsoever called,
Is still the subtlest snare the Tempter weaves
For man's frail sinful soul. Save me from power!
Grant me to follow still, a lowly soldier
In the great cause! The Commons shall be quelled.
What other news?
Dow. The best is that the King
And the Commissioners draw near a godly
And salutary peace. The King hath bent
His will in a wise humbleness; and now—
Crom. I joy to hear thee say so. What! the Lord
Hath turned his heart, and he hath yielded up
His haughty prelates, his ill councillors,
The popish mummery of his chapel?
Dow. Nay,
Not yet; but he hath promised.
Crom. Promised! Oh,
The King hath promised!
Mar. Well?
Crom. And ye believe?
Dow. Would'st have us doubters?
Crom. In good sooth, not I!
Believe who can! yet ere ye set him free,
Look to the stuffing of his saddle, search
The waste leaves of his prayer-book, lest ye find
Some vow to Henrietta, some shrewd protest,
Some antedated scroll to throw the shadow
Of a plain lie before his words. Search! search!
It is a prudent King, that casts about him
To rid him of his enemies. Search, I say.
Dow. Why, Cromwell, thou art bitter.
Crom. Heaven forefend!
I liked Charles Stuart well. I am of the fools
Whom habit counts amidst her slaves; that love,
For old acquaintance sake, each long-known pest
And close familiar evil. I liked him well;
The better that his proud disgracious speech
Seemed to my plain and downright simpleness
As honest as mine own. Ye all remember
What friends we were at Holmby. Harrison,
And e'en my loving kinsman, deemed I waxed
Faint in the cause. But rightly it is written
In the one Holy Book, Put not thy trust
In Princes.
Ire. Yet is he in Carisbrooke
A present danger. Round yon prison isle
Lurk spies and plots and treasons. Every breeze
Comes pregnant with quick rumours; every ear
Is bent to listen; every eye is turned
On those grey walls.
Crom. I grant ye. But astir,
Free as the breeze to traverse sea and land,
Creep in our councils, sweep across our camps,
Were the King harmless then? Yet thou art right;
He 's dangerous in Carisbrooke.
Har. Dismiss him;
Send him abroad unkinged; or drive him forth
As Amaziah.
Crom. (*aside.*) Ha! And they slew him!
Mar. What, send him to seek succour in each court,
From papal Rome to savage Muscovy,
Till he shall burst on us in triumph, heading
Europe's great armament.
Ire. Wert thou a soldier,
And in this cause, thou would'st cry welcome, Marten,
To such an armament?
Har. With His great help.
Crom. Ay, with His help and in this cause, if union
Dwelt in the land. But this is idle talk.
The King is dangerous; dangerous on the throne,
Dangerous in prison, dangerous abroad,
At home and everywhere. Yet this is idle.
We must abide the Commons' treaty.
Har. Wherefore
Lifts not the army the strong hand of power

Over these stiff-necked rulers? Put them down.
Tread out the firebrands.
Ire. Rather move the Commons
To bring the King to trial.
Crom. Who said that?
Mar. 'T was bravely spoken.
Crom. Who said that?
Dow. The words
Sounded like treason.
Crom. Sir, had we met here
To compass such intent, the very thought
Had been a treason. But the words fell straight
'Midst our unconscious hearts, unprompted, quick,
Startling even him who spake them—like the fire
That lit the Burning Bush. A sign from Heaven!
Direct from Heaven! A comfortable light
To our benighted spirits! As I wrestled
In prayer this morning, when I would have cried
For mercy on Charles Stuart, my parched tongue
Clave to my mouth. A token from on high!
A star lit up to guide us!
Mar. Yet the Commons
Will scarcely echo this rapt strain. The King
Hath friends amongst us.
Har. Fear not. He who sent
This impulse on his servants will know how
To turn all hearts.
Dow. Ye will not slay the King?
Crom. Life hangs not on our lips. Yet surely, sir,
I hope to spare him. Friends, we must not sleep
Over such stirring business. Downes, go thou
For Bradshaw, that resolved, and learned, and wise,
And godly law-man. Thou art like to find him
At the Guildhall. Say we would speak with him.
[*Exit Downes.*
Harrison!—Downes went forth as one who loves not
His errand—Lacks he zeal? 'T is a brave soldier,
And yet—Follow him, Marten; and return
With Bradshaw hither. We shall need thy counsel.
Delay not— [*Exit Marten.*
Harrison! thou truest soldier
Of the good cause, to thee we trust the charge
Of guarding our great prisoner. Make thee ready
For a swift journey. I 'll confer with thee
Alone afore thou goest.
Har. Should I not see
The General?
Crom. Wherefore? Hence. [*Exit Harrison.*
(*To Pride.*) Nay, Colonel, go not!
I 'd speak with thee, good Colonel. Rest thee, son,
I 'd speak with this good Colonel.
Pri. I attend
Your Excellency's pleasure.

(*During the next few speeches, Cromwell walks up and down the stage, now speaking to himself, now looking at the weather, now asking questions without attending to the answers, evidently absorbed in thought.*)

Crom. Ay, the light
Mercurial Harry Marten said but sooth;
They are unripe for this great charge. It shall be—
And yet—What is the hour?
Pri. Upon the stroke
Of one.
Ire. He listens not. Look how he searches
The weather with unseeing eyes.
Crom. 'T is stormy.
Pri. Nay, a bright day.
Ire. He hears not.
Crom. Sweep them off,
And the whole game is ours! But—Which way blows
The wind?
Pri. Right from the south.
Crom. It must be, shall be.
Ireton, I gave thee yesterday a scroll
Of the malignants in the Commons—Hark ye!
The Commons, our great masters! If Charles Stuart
Have friends in England, he will find them there
'Mid those self-seekers.
Pri. Wherefore not arraign
The King before the Council?
Crom. Sir, we need
The Commons' name. I would not that our just
And righteous cause lacked any form of law
To startle tender consciences. I have thought
Afore of this. Didst never see the thrasher
Winnow the chaff from the full grain? Good Colonel,
Thyself shalt play the husbandman, to cleanse
This sample of foul corn. Take yonder scroll,
And with a troop of horse, go post thyself
Beside the Commons' door, and seize each man
Whose name stains that white parchment. Treat all well,
But let none enter.
Pri. And my warrant?
Crom. Sir,
My word. If any question, say the General—
Pri. Lord Fairfax?
Crom. Ay, the good Lord General
Shall hear of thy good service. Fear it not.
Myself shall tell him. Thy good service, dearer
Than half-a-dozen battles; better worth
And richlier guerdoned. Haste! Lord Grey of Groby
Will aid thee to detect the knaves. Away!
Full many a goodly manor shall change masters
To-morrow 'fore the sequestrators. [*Exit Pride.*
Ire. So!
That work will be well done.
Crom. I loathe myself
That I employ the mercenary tool;
But we are in our great aims justified,
Our high and holy purpose. Saints and prophets
Have used uncleanly instruments. Good son,
Keep between Fairfax and these men. The weak
Wife-ridden faintling would demur and dally,
And pause at every step, and then draw back,
Unapt for good or ill. He must know nought.

Re-enter Harrison and Pride.

What make ye here again?
Pri. Dost thou not hear?
A mutiny amongst the soldiers.
Har. Nay,
But half-a-score malignants, who would fain
Stir up the soldiery.
Crom. And they?
Har. They listen,
But move not.

Crom. Seize the traitors. Shoot them dead;
If any murmur, still them too. Let death
Follow offence as closely as the sound
Of the harquebuss the flash. Art thou not gone?—
What stops thee?
Har. Be more merciful.
Crom. Why this
Is mercy. If thou saw'st one, match in hand,
Approach a mine hollowed beneath some rich
And populous town, would'st strike him down at once,
Or wait till he had fired the train?
Har. At once!
At once!
Crom. Well!—Go thou too, fair son! away!
I'll follow on the instant. Look I find
The guilty quiet. [*Exeunt Harrison and Ireton.*
We have been too easy,
And fostered malcontents. Yet this swift vengeance
Will strike a wholesome terror, and the echo
May reach to higher miscreants. Good Colonel,
Thou loiterest overlong. Go, block the door,
And let none pass. Be sure thou let none pass.
I must to yon poor traitors. Let none pass. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

An Apartment in Carisbrooke Castle.

The King and Herbert.

King. Herbert!
Herbert. My liege.
King. Put up my book. I wait
The grave Commissioners, and to be seen
Poring o'er Shakspeare's page—Oh heinous sin!
Inexpiable deadly sin!
Herb. Your Grace
Speaks cheerily.
King. Why I have fed my thoughts
On the sweet woodland tale, the lovely tale
Of Ardenne Forest, till the peaceful end,
The gentle comfortable end, hath bathed
My very heart in sunshine. We are here
Banished as the old Duke, and friends come round,
And foes relent, and calm Forgiveness hangs,
An Angel, in the air, to drop her balm
On all our wounds. I thank thee, royal spirit,
Thrice princely poet, from whose lightest scene
Kings may draw comfort. Take yon sprig of bay
And lay between the leaves. I marvel much
Where loiter the Commissioners.
Herb. Your Grace
Hath vanquished them so often, that they creep
Fearfully to the field—a beaten foe.
King. Nay, we are near agreed. I have granted more
Than they durst think for. They set forth to-day
Bearing my answer to the Commons. Look
To see a sudden peace. Many will deem
I have yielded overmuch; but I keep quick
The roots of kingly power, albeit the boughs
Be shrewdly lopt. And then to see again
My wife, my children, to reward my poor
And faithful servants, to walk free, to reign!
Look to see sudden peace.
Herb. Heaven speed the day!
Yet, Sire,—forgive my fear!—would thou had'st ta'en
The proffered means of safety, had escaped
The island prison!
King. What! when I had pledged
My word, my royal word! Fie! fie! good Herbert;
Better, if danger were, a thousand fold
Perish even here than forfeit that great bond
Of honour, a King's word. Fie! fie! Yet sooth
Thou mean'st me kindly, Herbert. Ha! the Sea,
That day and night hath chafed so angrily,
Breaking around us with so wild a coil,
An elemental warder, smiles again,
Merrily dancing in the cold keen light
Of the bright wintery Sun. We shall have boats
From England.
Herb. One hath landed, Sire.
King. And they
May bear my message without pause. Who comes?

Enter Hammond.

Ham. May't please you, Sire, the high Commissioners
Crave audience of your Majesty.
King. Admit them.

Enter Lord Salisbury, Lord Say, Sir Harry Vane, and other Commissioners, some of them Ministers.

See, Vane hath lost his frown! We shall have peace.
Good morrow, my good Lord of Salisbury!
Lord Say, Sir Harry Vane, and gentles all,
A fair good morrow. The sun smiles at last
Upon our meeting.
Say. Sunshine after storm;
A happy omen, Sire, a type of peace.
Salis. Yet clouds are gathering.
Say. Tush! the noon-day sun
Will overcome them.
Vane. Cease this heathenish talk
Of omens. Hath your grace prepared your answer
To the proposals of the Commons?
King. Reach
Yon paper, Herbert. Set ye forth to-day?
Vane. With the next tide.
King. So speed ye wind and wave,
And send ye swiftly hence, and swifter back,
Blest messengers of peace, winged like the dove
That bore the olive token. Take my answer,
A frank compliance with each article
Save twain, save only twain.
Say. And they—I pray thee
Be wholly gracious, Sire! Peril not thus
Your country's weal, your freedom, and your crown,
By timeless reservation.
King. I have yielded
Power and prerogative, and state and wealth,
For my dear country. All that was mine own,
All that was mine to give, I freely gave;
That I withhold is of the conscience. Look
On these white hairs, and think if one so signed,
Marked for the grave, may for the vain respect
Of crowns or kingdoms offer up his friends
Or his old worship. Mark me: I 'll not yield
A man of that devoted seven, nor bate
A word of my accustomed prayer, to save
My limbs from cankering fetters, or win back

That velvet prison, a throne. No more of this.
Bear ye the treaty, Sirs; and use but half
That godly gift of eloquence for me
That ye to me have shown, and be but heard
With half the grace, and we shall meet full soon
Subject and King, in peace, in blessed peace.—
(*Harrison heard without.*
Whoso asks entrance with so wild a din?
Give him admittance quickly.
Vane. Yet, my liege,
For these seven cavaliers—
King. No more! no more!
Thou hast my answer.—By the iron tread,
A soldier.

Enter Harrison.

Salis. Harrison! What brings thee hither?
Har. A sad and solemn message to your prisoner.
King. Speak out thy tidings. Speak thine errand, Sir.
I am strong-hearted—sovran privilege
Of them that tower so high!—Strong as yon eagle
That nests among the cliffs. I have borne loads
That would have sunk a meaner man in gulfs
Of deep despair. Thine errand. Stop! Who sent thee?
Har. The Commons.
King. Now thine errand.
Har. To demand
The body of Charles Stuart, sometime King
Of England—
King. Sometime King?
Har. Whom I attach
Of treason.
King. Treason and the King! Off, Sir!
I warn thee touch me not. Some natures feel
A shuddering loathing at cold-blooded worms,
Snakes, aspics, vipers, toads—my flesh doth creep
And shiver if the reptile man approach
Too closely. Show thy warrant.
Har. Look you, Sir,
The warrant be obeyed.
Vane. Dost thou not see
(*to Salisbury*) The master hand of Cromwell in this deed?
(*to Harrison.*) Where is the General?
Har. Come victorious home—
Know'st thou not that?—to lend his pious aid
To our great work.
Salis. But thou art from the Commons,
Not from the Council,—sure thou saidst the Commons?
And they were earnest for the treaty.
Har. Ay,
But in that goodly field grew tares, rank tares,
Which have been weeded out: stiff presbyters,
Bitter malignants, and those sons of wrath
Who falter in the better path—dead boughs
Upon a noble tree. Some fifty horse
Swept off the rubbish.
Say. But the men are safe?
Har. Even as thyself.—Now, Sir, hast thou enough
Studied yon parchment?
King. Treason! to arraign
A crowned King of treason! I am here
Treating with these same Commons on the faith,
The general faith of nations. I appeal
To thee, my foes; to thee, my gaoler. What!
Stand ye all mute? high lords and learned lawmen,
And reverend ministers? Ye had glib tongues
For subtle argument, and treasonous craft,
And cobweb sophistry. Have ye no word
For faith, for honour? not one word? Shame! shame!
Vane. We are the Commons' servants, and must needs
Obey their mandates.
Say. Yet with grief of heart—
Har. Silence!
King. Ay, silence! Sir, I thank thee yet
That sparest me that sharpest injury,
A traitor's pity. For that gentle deed
I yield me gently to thy hands. Lead on
Where'er thou wilt; I follow.
Har. Straight to London,
To bide thy trial.
King. What! will they dare that?
Doth not the very thought, the very word,
Appal the rebels? Trial! When we meet
Confronted in that regal Hall, the King
And his revolted subjects, whoso then
Shall be the Judge? The King. Whoso make inquest,
Whoso condemn, and whoso fling a pardon,
A scornful pardon on your heads? The King,
The King, I tell ye, Sirs. Come on! I pant
To meet these Judges. For ye, solemn mockers,
Grave men of peace, deceivers or deceived,
Sincere or false, boots little, fare ye well!
Yet give me yon vain treaty—Now, by Heaven,
I shame to have communed with ye! This slight paper,
That shivers at a touch, is tough and firm
Mated with such as ye. Bear to the Commons,
Your masters, yon torn fragments, fitting type
Of their divided factions!—fitting type
Of ye, men of a broken faith! Farewell!
I wait thy pleasure, Sir.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Painted Chamber. A table at which are seated Commissioners, Lawyers, &c.; a gothic window behind the table, through which objects that pass may be seen.

Bradshaw, Fairfax, Ireton, Downes, Cook, Marten, Tichburne, &c. Fairfax comes forward, followed by Bradshaw, Ireton, and Downes.

Fairfax. Soon as the day be fixed, apprise me, Sir;
The halberdiers shall wait ye.
Bradshaw. Good my lord,
Thou wilt not leave us? When did Fairfax fly
A post of danger? And his honoured name
Stands foremost in our roll.
Fair. Sir, I am sworn

The soldier of the Commons, and as soldier
Obey them loyally. All that ye need
For state or for defence in this sad pageant,
Our camp shall furnish. Save their General,
You may command the army. For this trial,
I like it not. I am no gownsman. Sirs,
The halberdiers shall wait ye. [*Exit Fairfax.*

Mar. What a nice
And peevish conscience Fairfax bears! Will send
Arms, horses, men, to escort the prisoner, line
The Court, defend the judges, guard the scaffold—
If so our wisdom wills—yet hold himself
Content and harmless, so his single voice
Swell not the general doom.

Dow. Yet 't is a wise
And noble gentleman.

Brad. Tush! a good sword-blade,
Keen in the field, but at the council dull
And heavy as the scabbard.

Enter Cromwell.

Lo! where comes
One whose bright spirit knows no dimness. Cromwell!

Crom. Hear ye the news, my masters? Harrison,
That bold and zealous soldier of our Israel,
Is here.

Brad. Where is the King?

Crom. The King of kings
Delivers him unto us. Harrison
Awaits his landing. We must be prepared
For instant trial. Glad am I and proud
To greet with looks so firm and resolute
This full and frequent council.

Brad. Yet you met
A great one who forsakes us.

Crom. The Lord General?
Why, on the battle-day such loss might cause
An hour's perplexity. Now—Hark ye, Sirs!
Passing awhile Lord Fairfax's door, I saw
The Queen.

Ire. In England! Didst thou see her face?

Crom. No. But I knew her by the wanton curls,
The mincing delicate step of pride, the gait
Erect and lofty. 'T was herself, I say,
Vain Jezebel!

Dow. At Fairfax's gate! Alas!
Poor lady!

Crom. (*Aside.*) Ha! And must we watch thee, too?
No word of this, good Sirs. (*Going to the table.*)
Why, master Cook,
What needs this long indictment? Seems to me
Thou dost mistake our cause. The crime is not
A trivial larceny, where some poor thief
Is fenced and hemmed in by a form of words
In tedious repetition, endless links
Of the strong chain of law, lest at some loophole
The paltry wretch escape. We try a King,
In the stern name of Justice. Fling aside
These cumbering subtleties, this maze of words,
And in brief homely phrase, such as the soldier
May con over his watchfire, or the milk-maid
Wonderingly murmur as she tends her kine,
Or the young boy trace in his first huge scroll,
Or younger girl sew in her sampler, say
That we arraign Charles Stuart, King of England,
For warring on his people. Let this deed
Be clear and open as beseems the men
On whom the Lord hath set his seal. Besides
That will let loose thy stream of eloquence,
Ice-bound by this cold freezing plea. What says
Our learned President?

Brad. Thou art right. Thou art right.
Our fair intent needs not a veil. Be sure
He shall have noble trial and speedy, such
As may beseem a King.

Dow. What is his bearing?

Crom. Resolved and confident. Lately at Windsor,
Eating a Spanish melon of choice flavour,
He bade his servant Herbert send the seeds
To be sowed straight at Hampton.

Mar. Many men
Plant acorns for their successors; this King sets
A gourd.

Crom. The Prophet's gourd. We are all mortal.
Sow but a grain of mustard, the green thing
Which soonest springs from death to life, and thou
Shalt wither ere the leaflets shoot.

Ire. The King
Deems that ye dare not try him.

Brad. Dare not! Cromwell,
How soon dost think—

Crom. Was 't not the plash of oars?

Brad. Cromwell!

Ire. He hears thee not. His sense rejects
All sound save that for which with such intense
And passionate zeal he listens. See his cheek
Quivers with expectation. Its old hue
Of ruddy brown is gone.

Crom. Hark! Hark! my masters!
He is come! He is come! We are about to do
A deed which shall draw on us questioning eyes
From the astonished nations. Men shall gaze,
Afeard and wondering on this spot of earth,
As on a comet in the Heavens, fatal
To kings of old. Start ye! Why at the first
I started, as a man who in a dream
Sees indistinct and terrible grim forms
Of death and danger float before his glazed
And wondering eyes; but then as one who wakes,
The inspiring light fell on me, and I saw
The guiding hand of Providence visibly
Beckoning to the great combat. We are His soldiers,
Following the Cloud by day, the Fire by night:—
And shall we not be constant? We are arrayed
Against the stiff combined embodied spirits
Of prelacy and tyranny—Shall we not
Be bold?

(*The King, Herbert, Harrison, &c. pass the window.*)

See! See! he passes! So shall pass
The oppressor from the earth. His very shadow,
The very traces of his foot are gone,
And the English ground is free, the English air
Free, free!—All praise be to his mighty name!
This is the crowning work. [*The Scene closes.*

SCENE II.

A Gallery leading to the King's Prison.

The Queen, Lady Fairfax, a Sentinel.

Lady Fairfax. Another guard! The pass-word that hath served us
Through court, and gate, and hall, will fail us here;
This is the immediate prison of the King.
Say, Royal Madam, had we best accost
Yon sentinel?

Queen. The prison of the King!
And I have lived to hear those words that pierce
My heart like daggers spoken familiarly
As she would say good day or fare ye well!
The prison of the King! England hath been
His prison—but this one leads—My lady Fairfax,
Command him to admit us.

Lady F. He draws nigh.

Sentinel. Fair mistresses, how won ye here? This gallery
Leads to the prisoner's chambers.

Lady F. We would see him.
Admit us.

Sent. Be ye frenetic? know ye not
That, save the Lords Commissioners, none dare
Approach the prisoner?

Queen. Say the King.

Sent. Who art thou,
That speak'st with such command?

Lady F. Know'st thou not *me*?
Thy General's wife.

Sent. I am of Cromwell's soldiers,
And own no woman's rule.

Queen. Admit us, slave!
I am the Queen, thy Queen, the Queen of England!
Make way.

Sent. Stand back, I say.

Queen. I am a wife
Seeking her husband in his prison. Soldier,
If thou have a man's heart!

Lady F. Here's money for thee—
Admit her.

Sent. I have fought in twenty fields,
A veteran of the cause. Put up your gold.
And, madam, please you, home!

Queen. Here is my home,—
My husband's prison gate. I'll live here, die here.
Here will I watch without as he within,
Till death, the great deliverer, comes to free
The captives. This shall be my grave. Charles!
Charles!

Lady F. Peace! Peace!

Queen. I thought I heard him. Charles! my Charles!
My King! My Husband!

Sent. There are many chambers
Between thee and the King. I prythee hence!

Lady F. Madam, take patience.

Queen. Charles! He must be dead
Already, that he answers not.

Enter Cromwell.

Crom. What means
This clamorous din of female tongues so near
The prison of the King? The Lady Fairfax!

Queen. Cromwell!

Crom. The Queen!

Queen. Cromwell, I hated thee,
Yet open yonder door, and I'll pray for thee
All my life long. Yon churlish sentinel—

Crom. Did but his duty. Lead her to her husband.

Queen. Be quick! Be quick!

Crom. The word is Naseby.

Queen. On!
Be quick! Be quick! [*Exeunt Queen and Sentinel.*

Crom. Now my good Lady Fairfax,
Right well beseemeth Christian charity
To succour them that suffer; howsoe'er
'Midst strict professors it may breed some marvel
That one so famed for rigid sanctity,
The gravest matron of the land, should herd
With yonder woman.

Lady F. With the Queen?

Crom. A papist;
A rank idolater; a mumming masquer;
A troller of lewd songs; a wanton dancer;
A vain upholder of that strength of Satan
The playhouse. They that be so eminent
As thou will find maligners; 't is the curse
Of our poor fallen nature. Be not seen
Hovering about these walls. I speak in love
Of the Lord General.

Lady F. The Lord General,
And many a godly minister, and I,
Weak woman though I be, mourn that these walls
Should come between the King and people. Peace
Had been a holier bond.

Crom. Peace! that our General,
The good Lord Fairfax, Captain of the guard,
Should tend the popish ladies to their mass;—
A high promotion! Peace! that every dungeon
May swarm with pious ministers;—forget they
Their old oppressions? Peace! that the grave matron,
The Lady Fairfax, may with troubled thoughts
Sit witness of lewd revels; mock and scorn
Of the light dames of the chamber, and the lordlings
Their gallants;—popinjays who scoff and jeer
At the staid solemn port, the decent coif,
The modest kerchief. I have heard such jeers
When yon gay Queen hath laughed.

Lady F. Laughed! Hath she dared!
Vain minion!

Crom. And to see thee with her! Thou
That shouldst have been a Jael in this land,
A Deborah, a Judith!

Lady F. Nay, we live
Under a milder law. Whate'er their crimes,
Urge not this bloody trial.

Crom. Whoso saith
That the trial shall be bloody? He who reads
All hearts, He only knows how my soul yearns
Toward yonder pair. I seek them now, a friend,
With friendly proffers. As we reach thy coach
I 'll tell thee more. Come, madam! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The King's Apartments.

The King and Herbert.

King. Herbert!
Her. An' please your Majesty.
King. Go seek
The General.
Her. Fairfax?
King. Cromwell! Cromwell! say
The King commands his presence. [*Exit Herbert.*
To fore-run him,
To plunge at once into this stormy sea
Of griefs, to summon my great foe, to front
The obdurate Commons, the fanatic army,
Even the mock judges, they who dare to reign
Over a King, to breast them all! Then trial,
Or peace! Death, or the crown! Rest comes with either
To me and England, comfortable rest,
After my many wanderings.

Enter the Queen.

Henrietta!
My wife, my Queen, is 't thou? Is 't not a dream?
For I have dreamed so, and awakened—Heaven
Shield me from such a waking! Is 't a truth?
Queen. Do not my tears give answer? Did that vision
Rain drops of joy like these?
King. To see thee here
Is to be young and free again; again
A bridegroom and a King.
Queen. Ever my King!
King. I have heard nothing like that voice of hope
Since we were parted.
Queen. Wherefore dost thou pause?
Why gaze on me so mournfully?
King. Alas!
Thou art pale, my Henrietta, very pale;
And this dear hand that was so round and fair,
Is thin and wan—oh, very wan!
Queen. 'T was pining
For thee that made it so. Think on the cause,
And thou 'lt not mourn its beauty.
King. And this grief
Will kill her! Joined to any other man,
She might have lived on in her loveliness
For half an age. She 's mine, and she will die.
Oh, this is a sad meeting! I have longed,
Have prayed to see thee—now—would thou wast safe
In France again, my dear one!
Queen. Say not so.
I bring thee comfort, safety. Holland, France,
Are firmly with thee; save the army, all
This rebel England is thine own: and e'en
Amid the army, some the greatest, some
That call themselves thy judges. 'T is the turn
Of fate; the reflux of the tide.
King. Forget not
That I am a prisoner, sweet one; a foredoomed,
Discrowned prisoner. As erewhile I passed
Sadly along, a soldier in his mood
Spat on me: none rebuked him, none cried shame;
None cleft the coward to the earth.
Queen. Oh, traitors!
Oh, sacrilegious rebels! Let my lips
Wipe off that scorn. My Charles, thou shalt resume
Thy state, shalt sit enthroned, a judge, a King,
Even in the solemn Hall, the lofty seat
Of their predestined treason. For thy life
It is assured—Lord Broghill and a band
Of faithful cavaliers—But thou shalt reign.
King. Dost thou remember Cromwell? Ere thou quitted'st
England he was most like the delving worm
Hypocrisy; that slough is cast, and now
His strong and shining wings soar high in air
As proud ambition. First demand of him
What King shall reign.
Queen. He is my trust.
King. Hast seen him?
Queen. He sent me to thee now.
King. Ha, wherefore! But I've learned to trust in nought
Save Heaven. Since thou art here, I am content
To live and reign, but all in honour. I 'll
Renounce no creed, resign no friend, abandon
No right or liberty of this abused,
Misguided people; no, nor bate one jot
Of the old prerogative, *my* privilege,
The right divine of Kings. Death were to me
As welcome as his pleasant evening rest
To the poor way-worn traveller;—and yet
I fain would live for thee—Cheer up, fair wife!—
Would live for love and thee. Hast seen thy children?
Queen. Not yet. They say Elizabeth, whose face
Even when a little child resembled thine
To wonder, hath pined after thee, and fed
Her love by thinking on thee, till she hath stolen
Unconsciously thy mien, and tone, and words
Of patient pensiveness; a dignity
Of youthful sorrow, beautiful and sad.
King. Poor child! poor child! a woeful heritage!
When I have gazed on the sweet seriousness
Of her young beauty, I have pictured her
In the bright May of life, a queenly bride,
Standing afore the altar with that look
Regal and calm, and pure as the azure skies
Of Paradise ere tears were born. Now——

Enter Cromwell.

Cromwell!
Crom. Didst thou desire my presence?
King. I sent for thee
To bear my message to thy comrades.
Crom. Sir,
I wait thy pleasure. I would welcome thee
Unto this goodly city——
King. Doth the gaoler
Welcome his prisoner? I am Charles Stuart,
And thou—Now shame on this rebellious blood!
I thought that it was disciplined and schooled
Into proud patience. Let me not appear
Discourteous—Sir, the King is bounden to thee!
Now hear mine errand.

Queen. Tush; hear me!
Crom. The Queen!
Queen. Fie! doff this strangeness, when it was thyself
That sent me hither! Cast aside the smooth
Obedient looks which hide thy thoughts. Be plain
And honest, Cromwell.
Crom. I have ever been so.
Queen. Open in speech, and heart, even as myself,
When I, thy Queen, hold out the hand of peace
And amity, and bid thee say what title
The King shall give to his great General.
Crom. None.
Thou bad'st me answer plainly.
Queen. Yet thou wast
Ambitious once.
Crom. Grant that I were,—as well
I trust I had more grace,—but say I were so,
Think'st thou not there be homely names which sound
As sweetly in men's ears, which shall outlive
A thousand titles in that book of fame,
History? All praise be to the Lord! I am not
Ambitious.
Queen. Choose thine office. Keep the name
Thy sword hath rendered famous. Be Lord Vicar;
Be Captain of the Guard; forbid this suit—
Thou canst an' if thou wilt—be Charles's friend,
And second man in the kingdom.
Crom. Second! Speak'st thou
These tempting words to me? I nor preside
O'er Court or Parliament; I am not, madam,
Lord General of the army. Seek those great ones.
My place is in the ranks. Would'st thou make me
The second in the kingdom? Seek those great ones.
The second!
Queen. Thou, and well thou know'st it, Cromwell,
Art the main prop of this rebellion! General,
Lord President, what are they but thy tools,
Thy puppets, moved by thy directing will
As chessmen by the skilful player? 'T is thou
That art the master-spirit of the time,
Idol of people, and of army, leader
Of the fanatic Commons, judge, sole judge
Of this unrighteous cause.
Crom. And she would make me
The second man of the kingdom! Thou but troublest
Thyself and me.
Queen. Yet hear me but one word.
Crom. No more of bribes!—thou bad'st me to speak plainly:
Thou hast been bred in courts, and deemest them
Omnipotent o'er all. But I eschew
The Mammon of unrighteousness. I warn ye,
Ye shall learn faith in one man's honesty
Before ye die.
Queen. Never in thine! At Holmby
We trusted—Fool again—'T was not in fear;
I dread thee not. Thou darest not try the King.
The very word stands as a double guard,
A triple armour, a bright shield before him;
A sacred halo plays around the head
Anointed and endiademed, a dim,
Mysterious glory. Who may dare to call
For justice on a King? Who dare to touch
The crowned and lofty head?
Crom. Was it at Hardwick,
Or Fotheringay—fie on my dull brain—
That the fair Queen of Scots, the popish woman,
The beautiful, his grandame, died?
Queen. A Queen,
A vain and envious woman, yet a Queen,
Condemned Queen Mary. Ye are subjects, rebels:
Ye dare not try your King; all else ye may do;
All else ye have done: fought, imprisoned, chased,
Ay, tracked and hunted, like that pious Henry,
The last of the red rose, whom visiting
Helpless in prison, his arch enemy
The fiendish Richard slew;—even as perchance——
Crom. Shame on thy slanderous tongue! There lays my sword.
Did'st take me for a murderer? Hearken, madam;
When thou shalt speak again of Henry's death,
Remember 't was the restless shrew of Anjou
That drove her gentle husband to his end.
King. Take up the sword; and, wife, I pr'ythee peace!
I yet am King enough to end these brawls.
Take up thy sword! Albeit my breast be bare,
And I unarmed before him, he 'll not strike.
That were an honest murder. There be ways
Stiller and darker; there be men whose craft
Can doom with other tongues, with other hands
Can slay. I know thee, Sir.
Crom. I would not slay
A sinner unprepared.
King. Go to! I know thee.
Say to the Parliament that I demand
A conference, Lords and Commons.
Crom. Sir, the Commons
Will grant no conference. Thou must address thee
To the High Court of Justice, to thy judges.
King. Oh, vain and shallow treason! Have ye not
The King's High Court, the judges of the land?
I own no other. Yet if they——
Crom. Expect
Nothing of them but justice. I came to thee,
As to a brother, in pure charity,
In meek and Christian love, when these sharp taunts
Arose betwixt us. Still I fain would save thee.
Resign the crown.
King. Never!
Crom. Oh vanity
Of man's proud heart! cling to that sinful toy,
A sound, an echo, a dim shadow, weakening
As the true substance flies—cling to that word,
And cast away thy life!
King. Hold, Henrietta!
What! Dost thou ask me for so poor a boon
As life to change fair honour? I 've a son,
A gallant princely boy—would'st have me yield
The old ancestral crown, his heritage,
For the small privilege to crawl awhile
On this vile earth, mated with fouler worms
Than they that sleep below? Would'st have me sell
My kingdom for a little breath?
Crom. Thy kingdom!
Thou hast not a strong-hold left.

King. I have one here.
Thou know'st my answer.
Queen. Yet if there be danger——
King. Peace, dearest, peace! Is the day fixed?
Crom. The day,
The very hour, is set. At noon to-morrow,
Heaven permitting——
King. The decrees of Heaven
Be oft to man's dark mind inscrutable;
The lightning flame hath fired the straw-thatched roof
Of harmless cottagers, hath rent the spire
Of consecrated temples, hath struck down
Even the dumb innocent oak that never lied,
Never rebelled, never blasphemed. A veil
Hangs before Heaven's high purpose. Yet when man
Slays man, albeit no King, a reckoning comes,
A deep and awful reckoning. I 'll abide
The trial.
Crom. At thy peril.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Westminster Hall, fitted up for the King's Trial. Bradshaw, seated as President; Cromwell, Ireton, Harrison, Downes, Marten, Tichburne, and other Judges, on benches; Cook, and other Lawyers, Clerks, &c., at a table; a chair of State for the King on one side; the Queen, veiled, and other ladies in a Gallery behind; the whole stage filled with Guards, Spectators, &c. &c.

Brad. Hath every name been called? and every Judge
Appeared at the high summons?
Clerk. Good my Lord,
Each one hath answered.
Ire. (*to Cromwell.*) The Lord General
Is wanting still.
Crom. The better.
Ire. How!
Crom. Fair son,
We have enow of work—Doth not yon cry
Announce the prisoner?—enow of work
For one brief day without him. Downes, sit here
Beside me, man. We lack not waverers;
Men whose long doubts would hold from rosy dawn
To the slow lighting of the evening star
In the clear heaven of June. Of such as they,
One were too many. How say'st thou, good Downes?
Dow. Even as thou say'st.
Crom. Yet 't is a valiant General,
A godly and a valiant. Ha! the prisoner!

Enter the King, attended by Herbert and other Servants, Hacker and Guards.

(*The Soldiers, &c. as the King walks to his chair, cry "Justice! Justice!"*)

Crier. Peace! silence in the court!
Brad. Ye shall have justice.
My Lords Commissioners, while I stood pausing
How fitliest to disclose our mighty plea,
Dallying with phrase and form, yon eager cry
Shot like an arrow to the mark, laying bare
The very core of our intent. Sirs, we
Are met to render justice, met to judge
In such a cause as scarce the lucent sun
That smiles upon us from his throne hath seen
Since light was born. We sit to judge a King,
Arraigned by his own people; to make inquest
Into the innocent blood which hath been spilled
Like water; into crime and tyranny,
Treason and murder. Look that we be pure,
My brethren! that we cast from out our hearts
All blinding passions: Fear that blinks and trembles
At shadows ere they come; Pride that walks dazzled
In the light of her vainglory; feeble Pity
Whose sight is quenched in tears; and grim Revenge
Her fierce eyes sealed with gore. Look that we chase
Each frail affection, each fond hidden sin,
Each meaner virtue from our hearts, and cling
To Justice, only Justice! Now for thee,
Charles Stuart, King of England: Thou art here
To render compt of awful crimes, of treason,
Conspiracy, and murder. Answer!
Cook. First
May it please you hear the charge?
King. Stop! Who are ye
That dare to question me?
Brad. Thy Judges.
King. Say
My subjects. I am a King whom none may judge
On earth. Who sent ye here?
Brad. The Commons.
King. What!
Be there no traitors, no conspirators,
No murderers save Kings, that they dare call
Stern justice down from Heaven? Sir, I fling back
The charge upon their heads, the guilt, the shame,
The eternal infamy—on them who sowed
The tares of hate in fields of love; who armed
Brother 'gainst brother, breaking the sweet peace
Of country innocence, the holy ties
Of nature breaking; making war accurst
As that Egyptian plague the worst and last
When the First-born were slain. I have no answer
For them or ye. I know ye not.
Brad. Be warned:
Plead to the accusation.
King. I will die
A thousand deaths, rather than by my breath
Give life to this new court against the laws
And liberties of England.
Brad. Sir, we know
Your love of liberty and England. Call
The witnesses. Be they in court?
Cook. They wait
Without.
Brad. Send for them quickly. Once again,
King, wilt thou plead?
King. Thou hast my answer, never!

(*A pause of a few moments, during which the head of the King's staff on which he was leaning falls and rolls across the stage.*)

Mar. (*to Ireton.*) What fell? The breathless silence of this vast
And crowded court gives to each common sound
A startling clearness. What has fallen?
Ire. The head
Of the King's staff. See how it spins and bounds
Along the floor, as hurrying to forsake
The royal wretch its master. Now it stops
At Cromwell's feet—direct at Cromwell's feet!
Crom. The toy is broken.
Har. What is the device?
Some vain idolatrous image?
Crom. No, a crown;
A gilded crown, a hollow glittering crown,
Shaped by some quaint and cunning goldsmith. Look
On what a reed he leans, who props himself
On such a bauble.
Dow. It rolled straight to thee;
If thou wast superstitious——
Crom. Pass the toy
On to the prisoner! he hath faith in omens—
I—fling him back his gewgaw!
Brad. Master Cook,
We wait too long.
Cook. My Lord, the witnesses——
Brad. Call any man. Within our bleeding land
There lives not one so blest in ignorance
As not to know this treason. None so high
But the storm overtopped him; none so low
But the wind stooped to root him up. Call any man;
The Judge upon the bench, the Halberdier
That guards the door.
Cook. Oliver Cromwell!
Crom. Ay!
Cook. No need to swear him; he hath ta'en already
The Judges' oath.
Crom. The Judges' oath, not this.
Omit no form of guardian law; remember
The life of man hangs on our lips.
King. Smooth traitor!

(*Cromwell is sworn.*)

Cook. Lieutenant-General Cromwell, wast thou present
In the great fight of Naseby?
Crom. Was I present?
Why I think ye know that. I was.
Cook. Didst see
The prisoner in the battle?
Crom. Many times.
He led his army, in a better cause
I should have said right gallantly. I saw him
First in the onset, last in the retreat.
That justice let me pay the King.
Brad. Raised he
His banner 'gainst his people? Didst thou see
The royal standard in the field?
Crom. My lord,
It rose full in the centre of their host,
Floating upon the heavy air.
Cook. The arms
Of England?
Crom. Ay, the very lion shield
That waved at Cressi and at Azincourt
Triumphant. None may better know than I,
For it so pleased the Ruler of the Field,
The Almighty King of Battles, that my arm
Struck down the standard-bearer, and restored
The English lion to the lion hearts
Of England.
Cook. Please you, Sir, retire. Now summon——
King. Call not another. What I have done boldly,
In the face of day and of the nation, that,
Nothing repenting, nothing derogating
From the King's high prerogative, as boldly
As freely I avow—to you—to all men.
I own ye not as Judges. Ye have power
As pirates or land-robbers o'er the wretch
Entrapped within their den, a power to mock
Your victim with a form of trial, to dress
Plain murder in a mask of law. As Judges
I know ye not.
Brad. Enough that you confess
The treason——
King. Stop! Sir, I appeal to them
Whence you derive your power.
Brad. The people? King,
Thou seest them here in us.
King. Oh, that my voice
Could reach my loyal people! That the winds
Could waft the echoes of this groined roof
So that each corner of the land might hear,
From the fair Southern valleys to the hills
Of my own native North, from the bleak shores
Of the great ocean to the channelled West,
Their rightful Monarch's cry. Then should ye hear
From the universal nation, town and plain,
Forest and village, the stern awful shout
Of just deliverance, mighty and prolonged,
Deafening the earth, and piercing Heaven, and smiting
Each guilty conscience with such fear as waits
On the great Judgment-Day. The wish is vain—
Ah! vainer than a dream? I and my people
Are over-mastered. Yet, Sir, I demand
A conference with these masters. Tell the Commons
The King would speak with them.
Brad. We have no power
To stay the trial.
Dow. Nay, good my lord, perchance
The King would yield such reason as might move
The Commons to renew the treaty. Best
Confer with them.
Crom. (*to Downes.*) Art mad?
Dow. 'T is ye are mad,
That urge with a remorseless haste this work
Of savage butchery onward. I was mad
That joined ye.
Crom. This is sudden.
Dow. He 's our King.
Crom. Our King! Have we not faced him in the field
A thousand times? Our King! Downes, hath the Lord
Forsaken thee? Why, I have seen thyself
Hewing through mailed battalia, till thy sword
And thy good arm were dyed in gore, to reach
Yon man. Didst mean to save him? Listen, Sir,
I am thy friend. 'T is said—I lend no ear

To slanderers, but this tale was forced upon me—
'T is said that one whose grave and honoured name
Sorts ill with midnight treachery, was seen
Stealing from the Queen's lodging!—I 'm thy friend,
Thy fast friend! We oft see in this bad world
The shadow Envy crawling stealthily
Behind fair Virtue;—I hold all for false
Unless thou prove it true;—I am thy friend!
But if the sequestrators heard this tale—
Thou hast broad lands. (*aloud.*) Why do ye pause?

Cook. My high
And honouring task to plead at this great bar
For lawful liberty, for suffering conscience,
For the old guardians of our rights, the Commons,
Against the lawless fiend Prerogative,
The persecuting Church, the tyrant King,
Were needless now and vain. The haughty prisoner
Denies your jurisdiction. I call on ye
For instant judgment.

Brad. Sir, for the last time
I ask thee, wilt thou plead?

King. Have I not answered?

Cook. Your judgment, good my Lords!

Brad. All ye who deem
Charles Stuart guilty, rise! (*The Judges all stand up.*

King. What, all!

Brad. Not one
Is wanting. Clerk, record him guilty.

Cook. Now,
The sentence!

Queen. (*from the Gallery.*) Traitors, hold!

Crom. (*to Ireton.*) Heard'st thou a scream?

Ire. 'T is the malignant wife of Fairfax.

Crom. No!
A greater far than she.

Queen. Hold, murderers!

Crom. (*aloud.*) Lead
Yon railing woman from her seat. My Lord,
Please you proceed.

Queen (*rushing to the King.*) Traitors! here is my seat—
I am the Queen!—here is my place, my seat,
My Lord and Sovereign—here at thy feet.
I claim it with a prouder, humbler heart,
A lowlier duty, a more loyal love,
Than when the false and glittering diadem
Encircled first my brow, a queenly bride.
Put me not from thee! scorn me not! I am
Thy wife.

King. Oh, true and faithful wife! Yet leave me,
Lest the strong armour of my soul, her patience,
Be melted by thy tears. Oh, go! go! go!
This is no place for thee.

Queen. Why thou art here!
Who shall divide us?

Ire. Force her from him, guards;
Remove her.

King. Tremble ye who come so near
As but to touch her garments. Cowards! slaves!
Though the King's power be gone, yet the man's strength
Remains unwithered. She 's my wife; my all.

Crom. None thinks to harm the lady. Good my Lord,
The hour wears fast with these slight toys.

Queen. I come
To aid ye, not impede. If in this land
To wear the lineal crown, maintain the laws,
Uphold the insulted church, be crimes, then I
Am guilty, guiltier than your King. 'T was I
That urged the war—ye know he loved me; I
That prompted his bold councils; edged and whetted
His great resolves, spurred his high courage on
Against ye, rebels! I that armed my knight,
And sent him forth to battle. Mine the crime—
Be mine the punishment! Deliver him,
And lead me to the block. Pause ye? My blood
Is royal too. Within my veins the rich
Commingled stream of princely Medici
And regal Bourbon flows; 't will mount as high,
'T will stain your axe as red, 't will feed as full
Your hate of Kings.

Crom. Madam, we wage no war
On women.

Queen. I have warred on ye, and now—
Take heed how ye release me! He is gentle,
Patient and kind; he can forgive. But I
Shall roam a frantic widow through the world,
Counting each day for lost that hath not gained
An enemy to England, a revenger
Of this foul murder.

Har. Woman, peace! The sentence!

Queen. *Your* sentence, bloody judges! As ye deal
With your anointed King, the red right arm
Of Heaven shall avenge him: here on earth
By clinging fear and black remorse, and death,
Unnatural, ghastly death, and then the fire,
The eternal fire, where panting murderers gasp
And cannot die, that deepest Hell which holds
The regicide.

Brad. Peace! I have overlong
Forgotten my great office. Hence! or force
Shall rid us of thy frenzy. Know'st thou not
That curses light upon the curser's head,
As surely as the cloud which the sun drains
From the salt sea returns into the wave
In stormy gusts or plashing showers? Remove her.

Queen. Oh mercy! mercy! I 'll not curse; I 'll
Be as gentle as a babe. You cannot doom him
Whilst I stand by. Even the hard headsman veils
His victim's eyes before he strikes, afeard
Lest his heart fail. And could ye, being men,
Not fiends, abide a wife's keen agony
Whilst—I 'll not leave thee, Charles! I 'll never leave thee!

King. This is the love stronger than life, the love
Of woman. Henrietta, listen. Loose
Thy arms from round my neck; here is no axe;
This is no scaffold. We shall meet anon,
Untouched, unharmed; I shall return to thee
Safe, safe,—shall bide with thee. Listen, my dear one;
Thy husband prays, thy King commands thee—Go!
Go! Lead her gently, very gently.

[*Exit the Queen, led.*

Now
I am ready. Speak your doom, and quickly.
Brad. Death.
Thou art adjudged to die. Sirs, do ye all
Accord in this just sentence?
(*The Judges all stand up.*
King. I am ready.
To a grey head, aching with royal cares,
The block is a kind pillow. Yet once more—
Brad. Silence. The sentence is pronounced; the time
Is past. Conduct him from the Court.
King. Not hear me!
Me, your anointed King! Look ye what justice
A meaner man may hope for.
Crom. Why refuse
His death-speech to a prisoner? Whoso knoweth
What weight hangs on his soul? Speak on and fear not.
King. Fear! Let the guilty fear. Feel if my pulse
Flutter? Look if my cheek be faded? Hearken
If my calm breathing be not regular,
Even as an infant's who hath dropt asleep
Upon its mother's breast? As I lift up
This Sword, miscalled of Justice, my clear voice
Hoarsens nor falters not. See, I can smile
As, thinking on the axe, I draw the bright
Keen edge across my hand. Fear! Would ye ask
What weight is on my soul? I tell thee none,
Save that I yielded once to your decree,
And slew my faithfullest. Oh, Strafford! Strafford!
This is a retribution!
Brad. Better weep
Thy sins, than one just holy act.
King. For ye
My subject-judges I could weep; for thee,
Beloved and lovely country. Thou wilt groan
Under the tyrant Many, till some bold
And crafty soldier, one who in the field
Is brave as the roused lion, at the Council
Watchful and gentle as the couchant pard,
The lovely spotted pard, what time she stoops
To spring upon her prey; one who puts on,
To win each several soul, his several sin,
A stern fanatic, a smooth hypocrite;
A fierce republican, a coarse buffoon,
Always a great bad man; till he shall come,
And climb the vacant throne, and fix him there,
A more than King. Cromwell, if such thou know'st,
Tell him the rack would prove an easier couch
Than he shall find that throne; tell him the crown
Of an Usurper's brow will scorch and burn,
As though the diamonded and ermined round
Were framed of glowing steel.
Crom. Hath His dread wrath
Smitten thee with frenzy?
King. Tell him, for thou know'st him,
That Doubt and Discord like fell harpies wait
Around the Usurper's board. By night, by day,
Beneath the palace roof, beneath that roof
More fair, the summer sky, fear shall appal
And danger threaten, and all natural loves
Wither and die; till on his dying bed,
Old 'fore his time, the wretched traitor lies
Heart-broken. Then, for well thou know'st him, Cromwell,
Bid him to think on me, and how I fell
Hewn in my strength and prime, like a proud oak,
The tallest of the forest, that but shivers
His glorious top and dies. Oh! thou shalt envy,
In thy long agony, my fall, that shakes
A kingdom, but not me.
Crom. He is possessed!—
My good Lord President, the day wears on—
Possessed of a fierce devil!
Brad. Lead him forth.
King. Why so. Ye are warned. On to my prison, Sirs!
On to my prison!
(*The Soldiers, &c. cry "On to Execution!" "Justice and Execution!"*)
Crom. Nay, my comrades,
Vex not a sinner's parting hour. The wrath
Is on him, Harrison!

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in Cromwell's House.

Cromwell, alone.

Crom. So, my Lord Broghill! We are shrewdly rid
Of one bold plotter. Now to strike at one,
Ere fresh conspiracies—

Enter Ireton.

What mak'st thou here,
Fair son?
Ire. The Lords Commissioners refuse
To sign the warrant. He 'll escape us yet.
Crom. Refuse! What, all?
Ire. No; Harrison and Bradshaw,
And Marten, still hold firm.
Crom. Too few! too few!
Ay, he'll escape. They'll treat. What say the traitors?
Ire. The most keep stubborn silence. Harrison
Is hoarse with railing.
Crom. Overhot! But that 's
A fault may pass for virtue. Overcold 's
Your modish sin. Weakness or treachery!
Peters or Judases! They'll treat. They'll treat.
Where lies thy regiment?
Ire. At Westminster.
One glance of their bright swords, one stirring note
Of their war-trumpet, and these dastard Judges—
I 'll seek them instantly.
Crom. Son, thou mistak'st.
Foul shame it were here in a Christian land
To govern by brute force—How many hast thou?
Ire. A thousand horse.
Crom. Or turn their very guards
Against the Judges—Be they trusty?
Ire. Sir,
I 'll answer for them as myself.
Crom. Nay, go not.
No force, good son! No force!

Enter a Servant.

What wouldst thou? Speak.
Servant. The Colonel Harrison sends me to crave
Your Excellency's presence.
Crom. Ay! I come.
Didst meet thy fellow-Robert, and the gallant
Whom thou saw'st here this morning?
Serv. Sir, they passed me.
At speed.
Crom. I come. No force, good son. Remember
This is a Christian land. We must keep pure
The Judgment-seat. No force. [*Exit Ireton.*
At speed! Ere now
They have crossed the Thames at Kew. We are quit of one
Bold Cavalier.—What said the Colonel?
Serv. Prayed
Your instant presence, and between his teeth
Muttered "Faint craven souls!"
Crom. Fie! fie! to speak,
Irreverently of such great ones. Faint
And craven souls! Follow my son; thou'lt find him
Heading his valiant horse. Bid him be still
Till I send to him—still as night. And now
For ye, wise Judges! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Painted Chamber. Bradshaw, Harrison, Cook, Downes, Tichburne, Marten, and other Judges.

Har. Be ye all smit with palsy? Hang your arms
Dead at your sides, that ye refuse to sign
The warrant? Be ye turned idolaters?
Rank worshippers of Baal?
Brad. They refuse not.
Mar. They parley, Sir; they dally, they delay.
Cook. The wiser if they did. 'T were vantage ground,
The keen axe swinging o'er his head, to treat
With yon great prisoner.
Har. Treat! Was yonder trial
A mummery, a stage-play, a farce? Oh blind
And stubborn generation!
Dow. The whole people
Are struck with awe and pity. Each man's cheek
Is pale; each woman's eye is wet; each child
Lifts up its little hands, as to implore
Mercy for the poor King.
Har. Captivity
And bondage will o'ertake them! They fall off
Like the revolted Tribes. Egyptian bondage!

Enter Cromwell.

Crom. Wherefore so loud, good Colonel? Sirs, I shame
To have held ye waiting here. A sudden cause,
I pray ye believe it urgent, hindered me.
Where is the warrant?—Have ye left a space
For my poor name?
Mar. Thou wilt find room enow.
There!
Crom. What, unsigned? Harrison! He came hither
To crave your signatures.
Har. I did my message.
But these Philistines—
Crom. Do ye shame to set
Your names to your own deeds? Did ye not pass
This solemn sentence in the face of day,
Before the arraigned King, the shouting people,
The Majesty of Heaven?
Tich. Thou dost mistake us.
Crom. I crave your pardon, Sirs. I deemed ye were
The judges, the King's judges, the elect
Of England, chosen by her godly Commons
As wisest, boldest, best. I did mistake ye.
Dow. Listen ere thou accuse us.
Mar. Listen! sign!
And we will listen though your pleaded reason
Outlast Hugh Peter's sermon.
Dow. Hear me first.
Crom. Well!
Dow. We have here Commissioners from Scotland
Praying our mercy on the King.
Crom. They gave him
Into our hands.
Har. And they are answered, Sir.
Thou know'st that Cromwell singly put them down,
As they had been young babes.
Dow. The pensionary—
Crom. Pshaw!
Dow. Hath sent pressing missives; Embassies
From every court are on the seas; and Charles
Proffers great terms.
Crom. Have we not all?
Cook. But he
Will give a fair security, a large
And general amnesty. So we are freed
From fear of after-reckoning.
Crom. Master Cook,
No wonder that a lawyer pleads to-day
Against his cause of yesterday—if feed
To the height. But thou art not of us; thy part
Is o'er.
Mar. He will give large securities!
For what?
Dow. The general safety and our own.
Mar. Safety!—say liberty! Securities.
Marry, large promises! An ye will trust,
Ye may be Earls and Marquesses, and portion
This pretty islet England as a manor
Amongst ye. Shame ye not to think a bribe
Might win your souls from freedom?
Har. From the Lord!
Would you desert His people? sell for gain
His cause?
Crom. Hush! hush! none thinketh to forsake
The cause!
Tich. Let Bradshaw sign. What need more names
Than the Lord President's?
Brad. I am ready, Sirs.
An ye will follow me; the instrument
Were else illegal. When ye are prepared,
Speak.
Crom. My good masters, ye remember me
Of a passage of my boyhood.
(*Then aside to Bradshaw and Harrison.*

Deem me not
A light unmeaning trifler, recollect
How Nathan spake to David. (*Then aloud.*) Being a child,
Nutting with other imps in the old copse
At Hinchinbroke, we saw across a wide
But shallow stream one overhanging hazel,
Whose lissome stalks were weighed by the rich fruitage
Almost into the water. As we stood
Eyeing the tempting boughs, a shining nut
Fell from its socket, dimpling wide around
The dark clear mirror. At that sight one bold
And hardy urchin, with myself, no less
In those young days a daring wight, at once
Plunged in the sparkling rivulet. It rose
Above our ancles, to our knees, half up
Our thighs; and my scared comrade in the midst
Of the stream turned roaring back, and gained the bank
Nutless and wet, amidst the scoffing shouts
Of the small people.

Brad. And thou?

Crom. Why I bore
My course right on, and gained the spoil. Sirs, we
Have plunged knee-deep in the waters; are midway
The stream: will ye turn now and leave the fruit
Ungathered, recreants? or hold boldly on
And win the holy prize of freedom? Give me
The warrant. (*signs.*) So! methinks an it were not
Over ambitious, and that 's a sin,
My homely name should stand alone to this
Most righteous scroll. Follow who list. I 've left
A space for the Lord President.

Brad. I fill it
With an unworthy name. (*signs.*)

Crom. Now swell the roll,
My masters! Whither goest thou, Marten? None
Shall stir till he hath signed. Thou a ripe scholar,
Not write thy name! I can write mine i' the dark,
And oft with my sword-point have traced in air
The viewless characters in the long hour
Before the joy of battle. Shut thine eyes,
And write thy name! Anywhere! See—
(*Marking Marten's cheek with a pen.*
Nay, Marten,
Stand still!—See! see! how fair and clerkly! Yet
This parchment is the smoother.

Mar. Hold thee sure
I 'll pay thee, General.

Tich. Why he hath marked thee
Like a new ruddled sheep.

Mar. I 'll pay thee.

Crom. Sign.

Mar. Willingly; joyfully. (*signs.*)

Crom. Why so. Where goes
Our zealous alderman? I deemed to see
His name the first.

Brad. He fears the city's safety,
Full, as he says, of the King's friends.

Crom. He fears!
They be bold men who fearlessly do own
Their fears. I dare not. Fear! Sir, didst thou come
By water hither?

Tich. No.

Crom. And didst thou meet
No soldiers on thy way?

Tich. Many. The streets
Are swarming with them.

Crom. Were they silent?

Tich. No,
They called aloud for execution.

Crom. Say,
For justice and for execution. Marry,
My Ironsides know not the new state trick
To separate the words. Well! are not they
A nearer fear? Sign boldly.

(*Cromwell, Marten, and Downes, advance to the front.*

Mar. They flock fast.

Crom. 'T is time, for plots are weaving round about us,
Like spiders' nets in Autumn. But this morning
I swept one web away. Lord Broghill—

Mar. What!
Hath he been here?

Dow. Is he discovered?

Crom. Sir,
I have a slow-hound's scent to track a traitor.
He 's found and he 's despatched.

Dow. How?

Mar. Where?

Crom. To Ireland,
With a commission 'gainst the rebels. 'T is
An honest soldier, who deserves to fight
For the good cause. He but mistook his side;
The Queen beguiled him, and the knightly sound
Of loyalty. But 't is an honest soldier.
He will prove faithful.

Mar. How didst win him?

Crom. How?
A word of praise, a thought of fear. How do men
Win traitors? Hark ye, Downes! Lord Broghill left
A list of the King's friends amongst us here;
Grave seeming Roundheads, bold and zealous soldiers,
High officers—I marvel not ye look
Distrustfully—one of renown, a Colonel.
A Judge too! Downes, hast thou signed yonder warrant?

Mar. What was the plan?

Crom. Go sign, I say! The plan!
A sudden rescue, to o'erpower the guard.—
Ha! Ingolsby!

(*Seizing one of the Judges, and leading him to the table.*)

Nay, man, if thou be questioned
Some dozen years hence, say that I forced thee, swear
Thy wicked kinsman held thy hand. Ay, now
The blank is nobly filled, and bravely! now
I know ye once again, the pious Judges,
The elect and godly of the land!
(*A trumpet heard without.*
Ha!—Marten,
Haste to my son; bid him disband his force;
The peril is gone by. [*Exit Marten.*

Har. What peril?

Crom. Ye
That are assembled here, should lift your voice
In earnest thanks for quick deliverance
From sudden danger. Ye knew nought of this

Great jeopardy, nor need ye know. Give thanks,
And question not. Ye are safe.
Brad. Art sure of that?
Crom. Did ye not hear me even now take order
The guard should be dispersed? Question no more.
Ye are so safe, that this slight parchment, sirs,
May be your shield.
Brad. The deed is incomplete.
It hath no date.
Crom. Ah! well reminded! write
The Thirtieth.
Dow. To-morrow? that were sudden.
Crom. Why so we must be. There be plots astir,
And speed is our best safety.—Thou hast signed?
Thy name is here amongst us?—I must haste
To overtake the hour. 'T is still unsealed.
Add thou my signet, Bradshaw. [*Exit Cromwell.*
Tich. What intends
The General?
Brad. Question not of that. A taper!
Your seals, my Lords Commissioners! Your seals!
[*The Scene closes.*

SCENE III.

The King's Apartments.

Enter the King leading in the Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Gloucester.

King. Here we may weep at leisure. Yon fierce ruffian
Will scarce pursue us here. Elizabeth,
I thought I had done with anger, but the soldier
Who gazed on thee awhile, with looks that seemed
To wither thy young beauty, and with words—
My child! my child! And I had not the power
To shield mine o n sweet child!
Eliz. I saw him not;
I heard him not: I could see none but thee;
Could hear no voice but thine.
King. When I am gone,
Who shall protect thee?
Glou. I shall soon be tall;
And then—
King. Poor boy! Elizabeth, be thou
A mother to him. Rear him up in peace
And humbleness. Show him how sweet Content
Can smile on dungeon floors; how the mewed lark
Sings in his narrow cage. Plant patience, dear ones,
Deep in your hearts.

Enter Herbert.

Herbert, where stays the Queen?
Still on that hopeless quest of hope, though friends
Drop from her fast as leaves in Autumn?
Herb. Sire,
Her grace is absent still. But general Cromwell
Craves audience of your Majesty.
King. Admit him.
Wipe off those tears, Elizabeth. Resume
Thy gentle courage. Thou art a Princess.

Enter Cromwell.

Sir,
Thou seest me with my children. Doth thine errand
Demand their absence?
Crom. No. I sent them to thee
In Christian charity. Thou hast not fallen
Amongst the Heathen.
King. Howsoever sent,
It was a royal boon. My heart hath ached
With the vain agony of longing love
To look upon those blooming cheeks, to kiss
Those red and innocent lips, to hear the sound
Of those dear voices.
Crom. Sir, 'twas meet they came,
That thou might'st see them once again, might'st say—
King. Farewell!—I can endure the word—a last
Farewell! I have dwelt so long upon the thought,
The sound seems nothing. Ye have signed the sentence?
Fear not to speak, sir.
Crom. 'T is a grievous duty—
King. Ye *have* signed. And the day?
Crom. To-morrow.
King. What!
So soon? And yet I thank ye. Speed is mercy.
Ye must away, poor children.
Crom. Nay, the children
May bide with thee till nightfall.
King. Take them, Herbert!
Take them.
Children. Oh! no, no, no!
King. Dear ones, I go
On a great journey. Bless ye once again,
My children! We must part. Farewell.
Eliz. Oh father,
Let me go with thee!
King. Know'st thou whither?
Eliz. Yes;
To Heaven. Oh take me with thee! I must die;
When the tree falls, the young buds wither. Take me
Along with thee to Heaven! Let us lie
Both in one grave!
King. Now bless ye! This is death;
This is bitterness of love.
Crom. Fair child,
Be comforted.
King. Didst thou not pat her head?
Crom. She minded me, all in her innocent tears,
Of one in mine own dwelling.
King. Thou hast daughters;
Be kind to her.
Crom. I will.
King. And the poor boy—
He comes not near the throne. Make not of him
A puppet King.
Crom. I think not of it.
King. Take them,
Good Herbert! And my wife—
Crom. She shall be safe;
Shall home to France unharmed.
King. Now fare ye well!—
Cromwell, come back!—No, bring them not again—
No more of parting—bless them! bless them! See,
The girl, the poor, poor girl, hath wept away
Her tears, and pants, and shivers like a fawn
Dying. Oh! for some gentle face to look on
When she revives, or she will surely die.

Crom. She shall be cared for.
[*Exeunt Herbert and the Children.*
King. Are they gone? quite gone?
I might have kissed them once again, have charged them
To love each other.—No, 't is best.
Crom. Thou bad'st me
Remain. What is thy will?
King. Be kind to them!
Be very kind to them!
Crom. Have I not promised?
Was that what thou would'st say?
King. No. But the love,
The o'ermastering love that was the death-pang, Cromwell.
Thou wilt be kind to them?
Crom. Would'st have me swear?
King. Nay, swear not, lest I doubt. I will believe thee.
And for the human pity thou hast shown,
The touch of natural truth, I pray thee take
My thanks.
Crom. I would have saved thee. By this hand,
This sinful hand, I would have saved thee, King,
Hadst thou flung by yon bauble.
King. There is One
Who reads all hearts, one who pursues all crimes,
From silver-tongued and bland hypocrisy
To treasonous murder. The unspoken thought,
And the loud lie, and the accursing act,
Mount to his throne together. Tempt him not.
I know thee for the worker of this deed,
And knowing pardon thee:—but tempt not Him!
Crom. Thy blood be on thy head! I would have saved thee—
Even now the thought stirred in me. Pardon, Lord,
That gazing on the father's agonies,
My heart of flesh waxed faint, and I forgot
Thy glory and Thy cause, the suffering saints,
The tyrant's tyranny, and Thy great word,
Freedom! Thy blood be on thy head.
King. So be it.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The King's Bedchamber.

The King, starting from his Couch; Herbert, asleep.

King. Herbert! Is 't time to rise? He sleeps. What sounds
Were those that roused me? Hark again! The clang
Of hammers! Yet the watch-light burns; the day
Is still unborn. This is a work of night,
Of deep funereal darkness. Each loud stroke
Rings like a knell, distinct, discordant, shrill;
Gathering, redoubling, echoing round my head,
Smiting me only with its sound; amid
The slumbering city, tolling in mine ear—
A passing bell? It is the scaffold. Heaven
Grant me to tread it with as calm a heart
As I bear now. His sleep is troubled. Herbert!
'T were best to wake him. Herbert! rouse thee, man!
Herb. Did your Grace call?
King. Ay; we should be to-day
Early astir. I 've a great business toward,
To exchange the kingly wreath, my crown of thorns,
For an eternal diadem; to die—
And I would go trim as a bridegroom. Give me
Yon ermined cloak. If the crisp nipping frost
Should cause me shiver, there be tongues would call
The wintry chillness Fear. Herbert, my sleep
Hath been as soft and balmy as young babes
Inherit from their blessed innocence,
Or hardy peasants win with honest toil.
When I awoke, thy slumbers were perturbed,
Unquiet.
Herb. Vexed, my liege, with dreams.
King. Of what?
Herb. So please you, sire, demand not.
King. Dost thou think
A dream can vex me now? Speak.
Herb. Thrice I slept,
And thrice I woke, and thrice the self-same vision
Haunted my fancy. Seemed this very room,
This dim and waning taper, this dark couch,
Beneath whose crimson canopy reclined
A form august and stately. The pale ray
Of the watch-light dwelt upon his face, and showed
His paler lineaments, where majesty
And manly beauty, and deep trenching thought,
And Care the wrinkler, all were blended now
Into one calm and holy pensiveness,
Softened by slumber. I stood gazing on him
With weeping love, as one awake; when sudden
A thick and palpable darkness fell around,
A blindness, and dull groans and piercing shrieks
A moment echoed; then they ceased, and light
Burst forth and music—light such as the flood
Of day-spring at the dawning, rosy, sparkling,
An insupportable brightness—and i' th' midst,
Over the couch, a milk-white dove, which soared
Right upward, cleaving with its train of light
The Heavens like a star. The couch remained
Vacant.
King. Oh that the spirit so may pass!
So rise! Thrice, did'st thou say?
Herb. Three times the vision
Passed o'er my fancy.
King. A thrice-blessed omen!
Herbert, my soul is full of serious joy,
Content and peaceful as the Autumn sun,
When smiling for awhile on the ripe sheaves,
And kissing the brown woods, he bids the world
A calm good-night. Bear witness that I die
In charity with all men; and take thou,
My kind and faithful servant, follower
Of my evil fortunes, true and tender, take
All that thy master hath to give—his thanks,
His poor but honest thanks. Another King
Shall better pay thee. Weep not. Seek the Bishop;
And if thou meet with that fair constancy,
My mournful Henrietta, strive to turn
Her steps away till—I 'm a coward yet,
And fear her, lest she come to plunge my thoughts
In the deep fountain of her sad fond tears,
To win me—Ha! can that impatient foot,
That hurrying hand, which shakes the door—
Enter the Queen.
Queen. My Charles!

King. Haste to the Bishop. [*Exit Herbert.*
Queen. Charles!
King. Already here!
Thou did'st fall trembling in my arms, last night,
Dizzy and faint and spent, as the tired martlet,
Midway her voyage, drops panting on the deck,
And slumbers through the tempest. I kissed off
The tears that hung on those fair eyelids, blessing
Thy speechless weariness, thy weeping love
That sobbed itself to rest. Never did mother
Watching her fevered infant pray for sleep
So calm, so deep, so long, as I besought
Of Heaven for thee when half unconscious, yet
Moaning and plaining like a dove, they bore thee
With gentle force away. And thou art here
Already! wakened into sense and life
And the day's agony.
Queen. Here! I have been
To Harrison, to Marten, to Lord Fairfax,
To Downes, to Ireton,—even at Bradshaw's feet
I've knelt to-day. Sleep now? shall I e'er sleep
Again!
King. At Bradshaw's feet! Oh perfect love,
How can I chide thee? Yet I would thou had'st spared
Thyself and me that scorn.
Queen. Do hunters scorn
The shrill cries of the lioness, whose cubs
They've snared, although the Forest-Queen approach
Crouching? Do seamen scorn the forked lightning,
Albeit the storm-cloud weep? They strove to soothe;
They spake of pity; one of hope.
King. Alas!
All thy life long the torturer Hope hath been
Thy master!—Yet if she can steal an hour
From grief—whom dost thou trust?
Queen. Thyself and Heaven
And a relenting woman. Wrap thyself
Close in my cloak—Here! here!—to Lady Fairfax!
She 's faithful; she 'll conceal thee. Take the cloak;
Waste not a point of time, not whilst the sand
Runs in the glass. Dost fear its shortness? See
How long it is! On with the cloak. Begone!
King. And thou!
Queen. My post is here.
King. To perish?
Queen. No,
To live to a blest old age with thee in freedom.
Away, my Charles, my King! I shall be safe—
And if I were not, could I live if thou—
Charles, thou wilt madden me. 'T is the first boon
I ever craved; and now, by our young loves,
By our commingled griefs, a mighty spell,
Our smiling children, and this bleeding land,
Go! I conjure thee, go!
King. I cannot.
Queen. King,
Begone! or I will speak such truth—and truth
Is a foul treason in this land—will rain
Such curses on them, as shall force them send me
To the scaffold at thy side. Fly!
King. Dost thou see
Fierce soldiers crowded round, as if to watch
A garrisoned fort, rather than one unarmed
Defenceless man, and think'st thou I could win
A step unchallenged? Nor though to escape
Were easy as to breathe, the vigilant guard
Smitten with sudden blindness, the unnumbered
And stirring swarms of this vast city locked
In charmed sleep, and darkness over all
Blacker than starless night, spectral and dim
As an eclipse at noontide: though the gates
Opened before me, and my feet were swift
As the Antelope's, not then, if it but perilled
A single hair of friend or foe, would I
Pass o'er the threshold. In my cause too much
Of blood hath fallen. Let mine seal all. I go
To death as to a bridal; thou thyself
In thy young beauty wast not welcomer
Than he. Farewell, beloved wife! My chosen!
My dear one! We have loved as peasants love,
Been fond and true as they. Now fare thee well!
I thank thee, and I bless thee. Pray for me,
My Henrietta.
Queen. Charles, thou shalt be saved.
Talk not of parting. I 'll to Fairfax; he
Gave hope, and hope is life.
King. Farewell!
Queen. That word—
I pr'ythee speak it not—withers me, lives
Like a serpent's hiss within mine ear, shouts through
My veins like poison, twines and coils about me,
Clinging and killing. 'T is a sound accurst,
A word of death and doom. Why should'st thou
speak it?
Thou shalt be saved; Fairfax shall save thee. Charles,
Give me a ringlet of thy hair—No, no—
Not now! not now! Thou shalt not die.
King. Sweet wife,
Say to my children that my last fond thought—
Queen. Last! Thou shalt live to tell them of thy
thoughts
Longer than they or I to hear thee. Hearken:
Promise thou wilt await me here! Let none—
They will not dare, they shall not. I but waste
The hour. To Fairfax, the good Fairfax! Charles,
Thou shalt not die. [*Exit Queen.*
King. Oh truest, fondest woman!
My matchless wife! The pang is mastered now:
I am Death's conqueror. My Faithfullest!
My Fairest! My most dear! I ne'er shall see
Those radiant looks again, or hear the sound
Of thy blithe voice, which was a hope; or feel
The thrilling pressure of thy hand, almost
A language, so the ardent spirit burned
And vibrated within thee! I 'll to prayer,
And chase away that image! I 'll to prayer,
And pray for thee, sweet wife! I 'll to my prayers.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

The Banqueting-House at Whitehall, glass folding-doors opening to the Scaffold, which is covered with black. The block, axe, &c. visible; Officers and other persons are busy in the back-ground, and Cromwell is also there giving directions.

Ireton, Harrison, and Hacker, meeting Cromwell.

Har. Cromwell! Good-morrow, Ireton! Whither goes
The General?
Ire. To see that all be ready
For this great deed.

Hack. He hath the eager step,
The dark light in his eye, the upward look,
The flush upon his cheek, that I've marked in him
When marching to the battle.
Har. Doth he not lead
To-day in a great combat, a most holy
And glorious victory?
Crom. (*at the back of the Stage.*) Hast thou ta'en order
That soon as the head 's off the Abbey bell
Begin to toll?
Officer. I have.
Crom. Look that the axe
Be keen, and the hand steady. Let us have
No butchery. [*advancing to the front of the Stage.*
If he die not, we must perish—
That were as nothing! but with us will die
The liberty for which the blood of saints
And martyrs hath been spilt, freedom of act,
Of speech, of will, of faith! Better one grey
Discrowned head should fall, albeit a thought
Before the time, than God's own people groan
In slavery for ever.
Har. Whoso doubteth
But he shall die?
Crom. 'T is rumoured, sirs, amongst
The soldiery, that one of a high place,
Fairfax—But I believe it not. Hast thou
The Warrant, Hacker?
Hack. No.
Ire. Since when doth Fairfax
Dare to impugn the sentence of a free
And public court of England—
Har. Of the Great
All-Righteous Judge who hath delivered him
Manifestly to us?
Hack. Will he dare oppose
Army and people? He alone!
Crom. Be sure
The good Lord-General, howsoe'er some scruple
May trouble him, will play a godly part
In this sad drama. Ay, I have the Warrant!
It is addressed to thee. Thou must receive
The prisoner, and conduct him hither.
Hack. Hath
The hour been yet resolved?
Crom. Not that I hear.

Enter Fairfax.

Ha! our great General! Well met, my Lord!
We that are laden with this heavy burthen
Lacked your sustaining aid!
Fair. Cromwell, I too
Am heavy laden.
Crom. You look ill at ease;
'T is this chill air, the nourisher of rheums,
The very fog of frost, that turns men's blood
To water.
Fair. No, the grief is here. Regret,
Almost remorse, and doubt and fear of wrong,
Press heavily upon me. Is this death
Lawful?
Ire. His country's sentence, good my Lord,
May be thy warrant.
Fair. An anointed King!
Har. A bloody tyrant.
Fair. Yet a man, whose doom
Lies on our conscience. We might save the King
Even now at the eleventh hour; we two
Hold the nice scales of life and death, and shall not
Fair mercy sway the balance? Dost thou hear me?
Wilt thou not answer? Canst thou doubt our power?
Crom. No. Man hath always power for ill. I know
We might desert our friends, betray our country,
Abandon our great cause, and sell our souls
To Hell. We might do this, and more; might shroud
These devilish sins in holy names, and call them
Loyalty, Honour, Faith, Repentance—cheats
Which the great Tempter loves!
Fair. Yet hearken, Cromwell!
Bethink thee of thy fame.
Crom. Talk'st thou of fame
To me? I am too mean a man, too lowly,
Too poor in state and name to need abjure
That princely sin; and for my humbleness
I duly render thanks. Were I as thou—
Beware the lust of fame, Lord General,
Of perishable fame, vain breath of man,
Slight bubble, frailer than the ocean foam
Which from her prow the good ship in her course
Scattereth and passeth on regardlessly.
Lord General, beware!
Fair. I am Lord General;
And I alone by mine own voice have power
To stay this deed.
Crom. Alone?
Fair. I 'll answer it
Before the Council.
Crom. Ha! alone!—come nearer.
Fair. What would'st thou of me?
Crom. Yonder men are firm
And honest in the cause, and brave as steel;
Yet are they zealots, blind and furious zealots!
I would not they should hear us—bloody zealots!
Fair. Speak, sir, we waste the hour.
Crom. I would confess
Relentings like thine own—They hear us not?
Fair. I joy to hear thee.
Crom. Thou art one elect,
A leader in the land, a chosen vessel,
And yet of such a mild and gracious mood,
That I, stern as I seem, may doff to thee
This smooth and governed mask of polity,
And show the struggling heart perplexed and grieved
In all its nakedness. Yes, I have known
The kindly natural love of man to man
His fellow!—the rough soldier's shuddering hate
Of violent death, save in the battle: lastly,
A passionate yearning for that sweetest power
Born of fair Mercy.
Fair. Yet but now thou chidd'st me,
And with a lofty scorn for such a weakness.
The change is sudden.
Crom. Good my Lord, I strove
And wrestled with each pitying thought as born
Of earthly pride and mortal sin. Full oft
We, that are watchers of our wretched selves,
Aiming at higher virtues, trample down
Fair shoots of charity and gentle love.
Yet still my breast was troubled. And since thou
Art moved by such relentings—

Fair. And a promise
Made to my wife.
Crom. A wise and pious lady!
Fair. Thou wilt then save the King?
Crom. Sir, we must have
Some higher warrantry than our wild will,
Our treacherous human will, afore we change
The fiat of a nation. Thou art a man
Elect and godly—Harrison!—go seek
The presence of the Lord. Perhaps to thee
A guiding answer, a divine impulsion,
May be vouchsafed. Go with him, Harrison!
Seek ye the Lord together.
Fair. 'T is a wise
And pious counsel.
Crom. Step apart awhile;
We will wait ye here.

[*Exeunt Fairfax and Harrison.*

Cromwell gives the Warrant to Hacker.

Now! now! be quick! [*Exit Hacker.*
Is the scaffold all prepared? The headsman waiting
With shrouded visage and bare arm? The axe
Whetted? Be ready on the instant. Where
Be the guards to line the room, mute wondering faces,
A living tapestry, and men of place
To witness this great deed? A King should fall
Decked with the pageantries of Death, the clouds
That roll around the setting sun.
Ire. If Fairfax
Return before he come—
Crom. Dost thou mistrust
Harrison's gift in prayer? The General 's safe.
Besides I sent erewhile the halberdiers
To guard Charles Stuart hither. Hacker 'll meet
His prisoner.
Ire. But should Fairfax—
Crom. Wherefore waste
A word on such a waverer!
Ire. What hath swayed him?
Crom. His wife! his wife! The Queen hath seen again
That haughty dame, and her fond tears—
Ire. I marvel
That thou endur'st that popish witch of France
So near.
Crom. I watch her. He must die! 'T is borne
Upon my soul as what shall be. The race,
The name shall perish.
Ire. Ay, the very name
Of King.
Crom. Of Stuart.
Ire. And of King.
Crom. So be it.
Will Bradshaw never come?

Enter Bradshaw, Cook, Marten and others.

Ah welcome! welcome!
Ye are late.
Brad. Yon living mass is hard to pierce
By men of civil calling. The armed soldiers
Can scantly force a passage for their prisoner.
Crom. He comes!
Brad. He 's at the gate.
Ire. What say the people?
Brad. The most are pale and silent, as a Fear
Hung its dull shadow over them; whilst some
Struck with a sudden pity weep and wonder
What ails them; and a few bold tongues are loud
In execration.
Ire. And the soldiers?
Mar. They
Are true to the good cause.
Crom. The righteous cause!
My friends and comrades, ye are come to witness
The mighty consummation. See, the sun
Breaks forth! The Heavens look down upon our work
Smiling! The Lord hath risen!
Ire. The King!

(*Enter the King, Hacker, Herbert, a Bishop, Guards, &c.*)

King. Why pause ye!
Come on.

(*Herbert gives the King a letter.*)

Herb. Sire, from thy son.
King. My boy! My boy!
No; no; this letter is of life, and I
And life have shaken hands. My kingly boy!
And the fair girl! I thought to have done with this.
But it so clings! Take back the letter, Herbert.
Take it, I say. Forgive me. Now, sirs,
What see ye on that platform? I am as one
Bent on a far and perilous voyage, who seeks
To hear what rocks beset his path. What see ye?
Brad. Only the black-masked headsman.
King. Ay, he wears
His mask upon his face, an honest mask.
What see ye more?
Brad. Nought save the living sea
Of human faces, blent into one mass
Of sentient various life: woman and man,
Childhood and infancy, and youth and age,
Commingled, with its multitudinous eyes
Upturned in expectation. Awful gaze!
Who may abide thy power?
King. I shall look upward.
Why pause we here?
Crom. Ay, why?
Brad. May it please thee, sir,
To rest awhile? Bring wine.
King. I need it not.
Yes! fill the cup! fill high the sparkling cup!
This is a holiday to loyal breasts,
The King's accession day. Fill high! fill high!
The block, the scaffold, the swift sudden axe,
Have yet a privilege beyond the slow
And painful dying bed, and I may quaff
In my full pride of strength a health to him,
Whom pass one short half-hour, the funeral knell
Proclaims my successor. Health to my son!
Health to the King of England! Start ye, sirs,
To hear the word? Health to King Charles, and peace
To this fair realm! And when that blessed time
Of rightful rule shall come, say that I left
For the bold traitors that condemned, the cowards,
Who not opposing, murdered me (I have won
So near the Throne of Truth that true words spring
Unbidden from my lips) say that I left
A pardon, liberal as the air, to all,
A free and royal pardon!—Pr'ythee speed me
On my rough journey.

Crom. Wherefore crowd ye there? Make way.

King. I thank thee, sir. My good Lord Bishop, Beware the step—

[*Exeunt King, Herbert, Bishop, and guards.*

(*A pause.*)

Crom. Doth he address the people?

Mar. Not so. He kneels.

Crom. 'T were fittest. Close the door. This wintry air is chill, and the Lord President Is of a feeble body.

(*Scream without.*)

Brad. Hush!

Crom. 'T is one Who must be stayed.

Brad. The Queen?

Crom. Go stop her, Ireton. [*Exit Ireton.* It were not meet that earthly loves should mingle With yonder dying prayer. Yes! Still he kneels. Hacker, come hither. If thou see a stir Amongst the crowd, send for my horse; they're ready;—

Or if, 'midst these grave men, some feeble heart Wax faint in the great cause, as such there be;— Or on the scaffold, if he cling to life Too fondly;—I'd not send a sinful soul Before his time to his accompt, good Bradshaw! But no delay! Is he still kneeling?—Mark me, No idle dalliance, Hacker! I must hence, Lest Fairfax—no weak dalliance! no delay! The cause, the cause, good Bradshaw!

[*Exit and the scene closes.*

SCENE III.

Another Gallery in Whitehall.

Enter Cromwell.

Crom. Methought I heard her here.—No!—If she win To Fairfax!—he must die, as Ahab erst Or Rehoboam, or as the great heathen Whom Brutus loved and slew. None ever called Brutus a murderer! And Charles had trial— 'T was more than Cæsar had!—free, open trial, If he had pleaded. But the Eternal Wrath Stiffened him in his pride. It was ordained, And I but an impassive instrument In the Almighty hand, an arrow chosen From out the sheaf. If I should reign hereafter, Men shall not call me bloody.—Hark! the bell! No—all is hush as midnight.—I shall be Tenderer of English lives. Have they forgot To sound the bell? He must be dead.

Queen. (*without.*) Lord Fairfax!

Crom. The Queen! the Queen!

Enter the Queen.

Queen. They told me he was here— I see him not,—but I have wept me blind:— And then that axe, that keen, bright edgy axe, Which flashed across my eyeballs, blinding me More than a sea of tears.—Here 's one.—Oh fly If thou be a man, and bid the headsman stay His blow for one short hour, one little hour, Till I have found Lord Fairfax! Thou shalt have Gold, mines of gold! Oh save him! save the King!

Crom. Peace! peace! Have comfort!

Queen. Comfort! and he dies. They murder him; the axe falls on his neck; The blood comes plashing!—Comfort!

Enter Lady Fairfax.

Lady F. Out alas! I can hear nought of Fairfax, royal Madam! Cromwell, the Master-murderer!

Queen. Oh forgive her? She knows not what she says. If thou be Cromwell, Thou hast the power to rescue: See, I kneel; I kiss thy feet. Oh save him! Take the crown; Take all but his dear life! Oh save him, save him! And I will be thy slave!—I, a born Princess, I, a crowned Queen, will be thy slave.

Crom. Arise! My Lady Fairfax, lead this frantic woman To where her children bide.

Queen. Thou wilt not make My children fatherless? Oh mercy! Mercy! I have a girl, a weeping innocent girl, That never learnt to smile, and she shall be Thy handmaid; she shall tend thy daughters. I, That was so proud, offer my fairest child To be thy bond-woman.

Crom. Raise her! Undo These clasping hands. I marvel, Lady Fairfax, Thou canst endure to see a creature kneel To one create.

Lady F. Out on thee, hypocrite! Where lags my husband?

Queen. Save him, save him, Cromwell!

Crom. Woman, arise! Will this long agony Endure for ever?

Enter Ireton on one side, followed by Fairfax and Harrison on the other.

Is he dead?

Fair. What means This piercing outcry?

Queen. Fairfax! He is saved! He is saved!

Ire. The bell! the Abbey bell! Hark!

Crom. There, The will of Heaven spake. The King is dead.

Fair. Look to the Queen. Cromwell, this bloody work Is thine.

Crom. This work is mine. For yon sad dame, She shall away to France. This deed is mine, And I will answer it. The Commonwealth Is firmly 'stablished, Ireton. Harrison, The Saints shall rule in Israel. My Lord General, The army is thine own, and I a soldier, A lowly follower in the cause. This deed Is mine.

THE END.

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